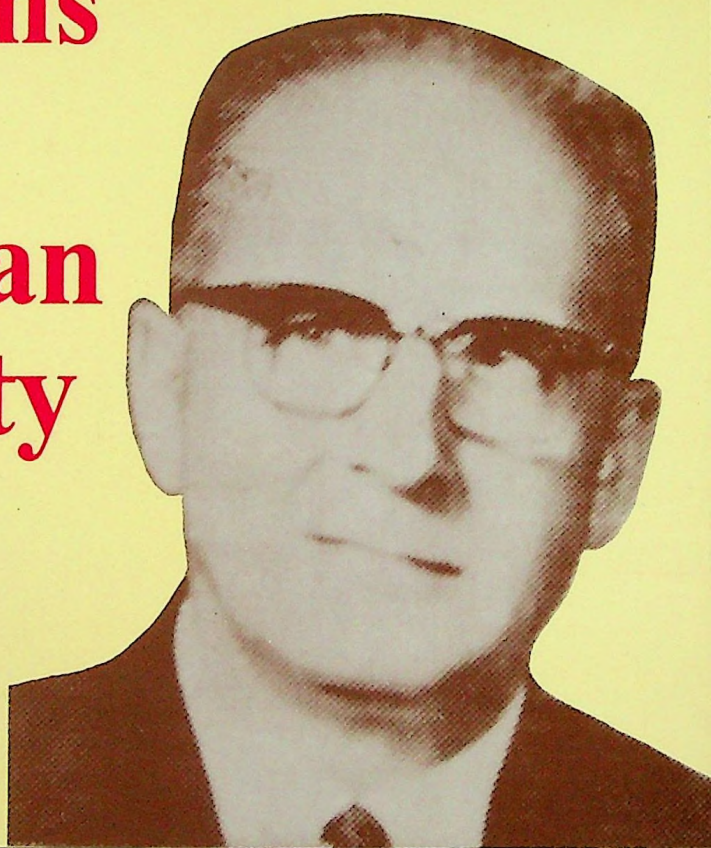


MALIK BENNABI

On the Origins *of* Human Society



Translated and annotated by
Mohamed Tahir El-Mesawi

Malik Bennabi
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**ON THE ORIGINS OF
HUMAN SOCIETY**

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1998
THE OPEN PRESS
LONDON TORONTO KUALA LUMPUR

Available from:
<http://IslamicBookstore.com>
tel +1 410-744-7393 Maryland,

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ISBN 983-9541-01-3

Published by
The Open Press Sdn.Bhd.,
3 Lorong 1A/71G, Jalan Carey,
46000 Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

Printed in Malaysia by
Academe Art & Printing Services

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Acknowledgements

At various stages of preparing this book for publication, I benefited greatly from many colleagues and friends both directly and indirectly. Mentioning them all here will be cumbersome to the reader. However, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to acknowledge my special indebtedness to a few of them:

To Ibrahim M. Zein and Louay M.Safi of the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM) for reading the translation together with the original text of Bennabi and for their pertinent comments which helped to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the translation; to El-Tigani Abdel Kadir Hamid of the Political Science Department, IIUM for reading through my introduction on Bennabi's legacy and making useful suggestions; to P.K.Koya of the Open Press for his critical remarks and attending to the small details of preparing the book for the press.

My special thanks also to Mrs. Aisha Jordan of the English Language Department of IIUM for her editorial examination of the final text.

Last but not least, I must express my heartfelt gratitude to my wife for undertaking the boring task of sorting out the key terms and names for the index.

Finally, none of the above mentioned is responsible for the final shape of the book. Any shortcomings and inaccuracies are solely mine.

Mohamed Tahir El-Mesawi.

MALIK BENNABI: A Legacy To Be Reckoned With

It was very much revealing that Malik Bennabi's (1905-1973) intellectual career began with his seminal work *Le Phénomène Coranique (The Quranic Phenomenon)*.¹ Appearing at a time when some Orientalists were making subtle and serious efforts to subvert Islam under the guise of scientific enquiry, Bennabi's *The Quranic Phenomenon* appeared to have been written in response to an historical and immediate need for a fresh approach to the study of the Qur'an to counter those efforts.² But it was more than that. *The Qur'anic Phenomenon* actually laid down the epistemological and methodological foundations of Bennabi's subsequent intellectual works in dealing with various issues pertaining to human society and culture.

In it, he generally developed his philosophical argument concerning the place and function of religion in human life and existence. The central thesis of the book that "religion appears as a cosmic phenomenon regulating human thought and civilization as gravity regulates matter and conditions its evolution," and that it thus "appears to be imprinted in the order of the universe as a law characteristic of the human spirit which gravitates in diverse orbits,"³ was only a prelude to his subsequent effort to elaborate and substantiate, in terms of sociological analysis, this central thesis about man and religion.

Though Bennabi's works have been readily available in French and Arabic since the late 1950s, his ideas, or the methodological approach he tried to develop in the study of

human socio-cultural affairs, seldom received serious scholarly attention. The general intellectual climate which prevailed until the late 1970s in the Arab world was not conducive to a positive reception of his work; in many instances, he was rather misunderstood and even sometimes misrepresented by different and conflicting ideological quarters. To show how the general intellectual and ideological climate could constitute a barrier against the acceptance of Bennabi's ideas by a wider audience in the Arab world during the 1960s and the 1970s, it would be sufficient to state here two examples.

The Jordanian Islamist Ghazi at-Tawba enjoyed a respectful position as a writer and a cultural source within the ranks of Islamic youth resurgence. In his book *al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Mu'āsir*, he classified Bennabi in the category of what he called the reformist school in contradistinction to the Islamic resurgence movement. A careful reading of at-Tawba's judgement reveals that it was based not on any systematic evaluation of Bennabi's ideas, but rather on the circumstances which surrounded his life during the 1950s and 1960s.

According to at-Tawba, the reformist school—in which he classified Bennabi—has the following characteristics with regard to its attitude towards the *status quo*:

1. Instead of seeking a radical change in the society, this school justifies the *status quo* as was the case with Bennabi, or it just tries to 'patch' it, as Muhammad 'Abdu attempted throughout his career.
2. The followers of this school do not refrain from cooperating with dictators and despotic rulers to achieve some of their goals.⁴

At a time when the struggle for independence in Algeria was gaining momentum, both militarily and politically, Bennabi, as an Algerian, aspired to put himself at the service of the

Algerian revolution by being closer to some of its leadership who were operating from Cairo. He, therefore, moved from France to Egypt seeking political asylum. This is clear from a letter he reproduced in his book, *Fī Mahab al-Ma'rasah*. He addressed the letter to the representatives of the Algerian Liberation Front in Cairo giving the following reasons for his coming to Egypt:

1. The immediate and personal purpose was to look for the possibility of publishing his book *L'Afro-Asiatisme*. As he deemed it, this book was closely related to the Algerian problem since it situated it in a wider perspective of the Afro-Asian struggle for independence.

2. The second and major purpose, as he stated in the letter, concerned his mission as an "Algerian who has participated in the anti-colonial struggle for a quarter of a century, and who has now come to continue that struggle under the banner of the Algerian revolution."

Explaining his mission more specifically, he said: "I believe that even if I were recruited as a doctor's attendant in the battlefield, that would enable me at the same time to write the history of the revolution from the position of a direct witness!"⁵

Unfortunately, he was not given this opportunity; the leaders of the revolution did not even care to reply his letter.⁶

Upon his arrival in Cairo in 1956 carrying with him the manuscript of his book *L'Afro-Asiatisme*,⁷ he was well received by the nationalist government of Gamal Abdel Nasser. His book was published in 1957, thanks to a sponsorship by the ministry of information, and shortly after he was appointed advisor to the Council for Islamic Affairs whose secretary-general was then Anwar Sadat who wrote a foreword to the first Arabic edition of the book.⁸

Seen from the atmosphere of the bloody confrontation

between the *Ikhwan* movement and the Nasserite regime, these events were sufficient to tarnish Bennabi's image in the eyes of many, especially those involved in, or sympathizing with, the Islamic movement; all the more so when such events are taken out of their historical and political context.

Based on personal experiences and encounters with number of Islamically oriented youth from Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Jordan and other Arab countries, the present writer would assert that Ghazi at-Tauba's book contributed a good deal in diverting a wide audience from Bennabi's ideas.

The other example is the case of an Arab Marxist, Tayeb Tizini of Syria. This man, a professor in the Syrian University in the 1960s and 1970s, laboured to develop a materialistic interpretation of Muslim history based on the dialectical doctrine of historical materialism. Tayeb Tizini simply dismissed Bennabi as merely a staunch *salafī*, and therefore a retrogressive writer whose ideas, according to him, run counter to the historical aspirations of the Arab people for emancipation and progress. For him, no aspect in Bennabi's thinking was worthy of consideration!⁹

These two writers stand as revealing examples as to how ideological lens could prevent their bearers not only from a critical and creative engagement with ideas and approaches differing from theirs, but also prevent them from at least trying to understand what they actually stand for! However, we should once again emphasise the fact that it was the general frame of mind prevailing in that period that constituted a barrier against new ideas such as Bennabi's. Individual writers responding negatively to such ideas are only manifestations of that frame of mind.

Only in the late 1970s did students of contemporary Islamic thought start to devote remarkable attention to Bennabi's work. Perhaps the Palestinian-Jordanian professor of philosophy Fahmī

Jad'ān should be credited as the first in Arab academic and intellectual circles to have drawn attention, though in a sketchy manner, to the originality of Bennabi's ideas. According to Jad'ān, Bennabi stood out as the forerunner of a new stage in the development of Islamic thought in the Arab world. As he put it, "Bennabi was the most prominent Arab thinker, since the time of Ibn Khaldun, to have concerned himself with the question of civilization."¹⁰

Since then an increasing number of published books and journal articles as well as university dissertations have been produced addressing various aspects of his thought. However, despite the high acclaim with which Bennabi's legacy has been 'rediscovered' during the 1980s and 1990s, it seems that the true significance and enduring aspects of his work have evaded the attention of most of those who have written about him. Much of the Bennabian scholarship, if one might say so, has been caught by those aspects and issues which surface Bennabi's thought. Thus, issues such as those concerning the concepts and meaning of culture, civilization, the cyclical conception of historical evolution and social change, and the relevance of all that to the present and immediate preoccupations of Muslims, have been at the centre of attention for most of the writings about him. Accordingly, little heed, if any, has been given to the fundamental theoretical and methodological framework underlying Bennabi's treatment of such issues.

As a result, the latent conceptual and methodological features which really mark Bennabi's originality as well as his significance and relevance to both Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship have not been brought to light. This may be due, to a considerable extent, to the fact that Bennabi was not such a systematic writer who would bother to present his ideas and theories in a rather formal fashion. As a free and original thinker, as Fawzia Bariun pertinently observes, "he seems to have believed that his own philosophical and sociological insights and

observations liberated him from pedantic obligations."¹¹

This is not to say that Bennabi's work is an amorphous, ad hoc compilation of ideas which have no logical or systematic link between them. On the contrary, in his attempt to comprehend the dynamics of human society and civilization and to conceptualize the laws and patterns governing socio-cultural phenomena, Bennabi seems to be unmistakably informed by a unity of vision and understanding of the working of human nature and the socio-historical existence of the human race. This unity of vision and understanding has in fact crystallized in a system of thought according to which the parts and the particulars find their proper place within a comprehensive whole, and the minute details acquire their significance in the context of a wider and general pattern.

In a sense, Bennabi is a grand-theory builder who does not, however, sacrifice the particularities and individualities of things and phenomena for the sake of universals and generalities. Put differently, his quest and interest in developing a conceptual and theoretical framework that would apply to human society and civilization in general, irrespective of historical and cultural specifics, did not actually divert him from taking stock in the minutiae of every-day human life and activity. For him, for a sound sociological analysis of the dynamics and working of human history and civilization, we need not sacrifice the micro details of daily thoughts, behaviours and actions of human individuals, the real actors on the socio-historical scene. Indeed, civilization is but the sum-total of the interactive processes of those details as they take shape out of a concerted action seeking the realization of common objectives and the actualization of shared values and norms.

In his attempt to circumscribe the reality of human socio-historical existence and to grasp the dynamics of civilization, Bennabi has in fact developed what can be accurately termed as

a philosophical anthropology. It is an anthropology clearly defined by the Islamic vision of the human condition. Whether he is dealing with the themes of culture, civilization, history, or society as specific fields of scientific investigation and sociological analysis, these are only different, but irrevocably inter-related, facets or dimensions of the human condition as an empirico-historical reality deeply grounded in the metaphysical order of existence.

Since we are not committed here to presenting a detailed account and analysis of Bennabi's thought, the preceding pages are deemed sufficient to provide an overview of the general framework within which that thought evolved.

However, we should stress here the fact that Bennabi's work contains a wealth of enduring ideas and insights that need to be gleaned out of the complexity of multi-layered analysis of a wide range of issues. The systematic recasting of those ideas and insights will establish, the present writer is strongly convinced, the topicality and relevance of Bennabi's work with regard to various theoretical and practical issues which are of special interest to students of Islamic thought and the social sciences as well.¹²

Similarly, a comprehensive and well informed biographical portrait of Bennabi is yet to be produced. Such biographical work will certainly have to draw on Bennabi's two-volume *Memoirs of A Witness of The Century*,¹³ and also will have to discover new sources of information on the later part of his life, as his autobiography practically ends in 1939.¹⁴ Indeed, such a biographical work is highly needed in order to build a proper image of his intellectual development and career. Closely related to this is the need of an inter-textual analysis that should trace Bennabi's interaction, both positively and negatively, with the different intellectual currents of his time.

Having said this, let us now turn to the work which we

present here to the reader. Together with another six works of his,¹⁵ *The Origins of Human Society* constitutes the core of Bennabi's intellectual legacy which consists of eighteen titles already published. Written in 1962, this book seems to be a deep and deliberate response to the intellectual and social science discourse which prevailed in academic and intellectual circles in most Arab countries during the 1950s through to 1970s, though its historical origins can be traced back earlier than the 1940s.

As the cultural history of that period can show, the modern-educated Arab academicians and intellectuals were disseminating a discourse that was mainly shaped by western inspirations. Indeed, it was a discourse which could not, as Bennabi would have judged it, go beyond the mere plagiarism of western theories and schools of thought, especially as far as the study and understanding of human society and civilization are concerned. Almost all the western 'isms' of the time had their local representatives and advocates in those circles, from philosophy and the human and social sciences to literary criticism and the visual arts. Books, university dissertations and textbooks were produced which were no more than exercises of translation and compilation of western ideas lacking the spirit of critical and creative approach.

In other words, the secular epistemology and world view that crystallized in the wake of western modernity held sway over the majority of Arab academicians and intellectuals as they did with their counterparts in many parts of the world. Little critical and creative effort was made to adapt the knowledge acquired from the West to the socio-historical conditions of the indigenous Muslim societies, let alone to scrutinize it in the light of Islamic epistemic parameters. As a critical thinker, Bennabi was not at ease with such a situation, nor was he with the position of many Islamically-oriented scholars who would be content to uncritically rely on the intellectual legacy of earlier Muslim scholars to face the contemporary problems and challenges besetting Muslim

societies.

For him, neither of these positions can work. Only an original and critical approach would do. There is, therefore, an urgent need, as he tells us throughout his works, to go to the origins of things so as to understand the unfolding and working of human socio-cultural dynamics. This requires freeing oneself from the distorting lens which many schools have put between reality and us. And it is in this context that Bennabi set out in this book to formulate a theoretical and analytical framework for the study of human society.

It is revealing in this connection that, in his critical response to the intellectual climate of his time, Bennabi does not, in the present book as well as in many others, refer directly to the local advocates and propagators of western ideas and schools of thought. His dialogue and critique are instead addressed to the initiators of those ideas and the masters, so to speak, of those schools. Perhaps, one might presume, he believed that an original and creative position should rather engage itself with the very sources of the prevailing discourse, a strategy by means of which a profound lesson can be taught to the local followers and compilers!

Our attempt to study and translate Bennabi's work aims at achieving two main objectives: 1) to acquaint a wider audience with the contribution of an outstanding Muslim thinker who has received less scholarly attention than what he actually deserves; 2) to add a new dimension to the ongoing debate on what has come to be known as Islamization of knowledge, on the assumption that the Islamization of knowledge discourse should be looked at within a wider context both historically and epistemologically.

This discourse did not emerge, as some would have us believe, from an intellectual vacuum, nor are the major issues around which it revolves totally novel issues in the historical

development of modern Islamic thought. It is rather a crystallization of a growing general awareness among Muslim intellectuals over the last fifty to sixty years of the inadequacy of modern social science theories and categories to lead to a proper treatment of the problems arising in Muslim societies.¹⁶ As Bennabi himself perceived the situation, this inadequacy results mainly from the civilizational incompatibility between those theories and categories and the socio-historical and cultural context to which they are applied in Muslim lands.

To put it more clearly, modern social sciences have evolved and taken shape, according to Bennabi, within the western historical and civilizational context and they are therefore marked by the specific experience of western societies. For that matter, they derive their main concepts and categories from the cultural and philosophical foundations of that experience. Moreover, social problems and phenomena, Bennabi points out, have their own history and different courses of development respective to the cultural and civilizational context in which they arise.¹⁷ Accordingly, he strongly puts it, any attempt to disregard this truth and indulge in mere *plagiat* (plagiarization) is either suicide or assassination.¹⁸

Referring to the problems facing the newly independent Afro-Asian countries in the 1950s and 1960s, Bennabi emphasized the necessity of what he termed as a 'sociology of independence' (*une sociologie de l'indépendance*)¹⁹ which should be both critical and constructive.

In its critical aspect, this new or 'special sociology',²⁰ Bennabi suggests, has to address itself to the social pathologies which in Muslim lands particularly represent the burdening legacy of the post-Almohad age of civilizational decadence combined with the distorting legacy of the colonial era. As for its constructive dimension, the task of this 'new sociology' should be to contribute in the edification of "a fundamental culture that

would radically transform our [social] being" as well as in the restoration and reconstruction of the "social relations network" (*réseau des liaisons sociales*) in the Muslim *ummah*, so as to realize anew the essential synthesis of the primary factors of civilization, namely man, soil and time.²¹

It was against this background that Bennabi set out in the present work to formulate what can be seen as a general theory on human society. This general theory was intended, as Bennabi mentions in the preface, to be an introduction to investigating the issue from a specifically Islamic perspective. Although we are not here to speculate on how Bennabi's Islamic theorizing could have been like, it can however be stated that the elements of such theorizing are scattered in his different works.

The present translation is based on the Arabic version of Bennabi's *Milād Mujtama'* which was first published in 1962 in Cairo. This version was itself a translation from a French original which has never been published. Indeed, the Arabic translation was done simultaneously while the French text was being written, under the supervision of the author himself.

Being aware that languages have their own structures as well as images and symbols tied up with their historical experience and cultural universe, we believe that the act of translation is not a mere linguistic exercise. Rendering a text into a specific language should be to make it compatible with the structures, images and cultural universe of that language so as to make it meaningful to its users. This should not imply, however, jeopardizing the text's message or compromising its character. It is with this spirit that our attempt to translate this book was made.

To attain a reasonable level in the clarity of ideas and fluency of the text, an effort was made to cross-read the translated book with Bennabi's other works, especially those dealing with similar issues. The notes and a comprehensive index

would, we hope, make the book more useful to scholars and students.

Notes

1. First published in French in Algiers, 1946. Its first Arabic version came out in 1959 after Bennabi left France to Egypt seeking political asylum, after the armed struggle against the French broke out in 1954.

The English version of the book by Abu Bilal Kirkari was published by American Trust Publications, Indianapolis in 1983. The translation, however, suffers from noticeable inaccuracies in many instances which frustrates the meaning intended by the author. The translator does not seem to have taken into account the Arabic version of the book in which some points were further elaborated by the author himself.

Also no effort has been made to provide the translated text with annotations and cross references, especially as it abounds with many references to historical events, schools of thought, personalities, etc. These and an index would have made the book much more useful to the non-specialized reader.

2. *Le Phénomène Coranique*, Algiers: S.E.C., 1992, p. 7 (*Az-Zāhirah al Qur'āniyah*, Damascus: Dar Al Fikr, 4th print, 1987, p. 56).
3. *Ibid*, p. 157 [300]
4. Ghazi at-Tawba: *Al Fikr al-Islāmī al-Mu'āsir. Dirāsah wa Taawīm (Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Study and Critical Assessment)*, Beirut: Dar-al-Qalam, 1977, pp.78-9. Cf. Fauzia Bariun: *Malik Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, Kuala Lumpur, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), 1993, p.94-100.
5. See *Fi Mahab al-Ma'rakah (In the Whirlwind of the Battle)*, Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991, pp.90-91.
6. *Ibid*, p.91.
7. As a pertinent observer of the world scene, Bennabi devoted a special attention to the Bandoeng Conference which was convened in the Indonesian city of Bandoeng in 1955 by a number of Third World political leaders, and thus paved the ground for the formation of the non-Alighment Movement.

In his book *L'Afro-Asiatisme. Conclusions sur La Conférence de Bandoeng*, he tried to capture the cultural and historical as well as strategic significance of the said conference as an event that would put Afro-Asian cultural and political forces on a course of creative action beneficial not only to the peoples of Asia and Africa, but also to mankind at large.

However, as Bennabi himself admitted in his introduction to the 2nd Arabic edition

of this book (almost fifteen years after the first edition in 1957), "the Bandoeng Conference of 1955 and that which succeeded it in 1957 in Cairo had gathered all the necessary conditions of revolution in the Third World save one condition, that is the intellectual element necessary for sparking it off." As he further put it in a sad tone, the idea of Afro-Asiatism "was nipped in the bud, while its nippers were unaware!" See his *Fikrat al-Ifriqiyah al-Asiyawiyah Fi Daw' Mu'tamar Bandoeng*, Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1981, 1402/1981.

8. According to some sources, the late Shaikh Ahmad Hasan al-Baquri and Shaikh Mahmoud Mohammad Shakir played a key role in introducing Bennabi to the Egyptian scene. A former member of the Ikhwan Movement who was then minister of the *Awqaf* and Islamic Affairs, Al-Baquri was influential in establishing Bennabi's contacts with the official milieu in Cairo. As for Shakir, a great traditionalist and prolific writer, he should be credited with introducing Bennabi to the intellectual circles. Besides writing a long and impressive foreword to the first Arabic edition of Bennabi's *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, he also bought a few hundred copies of the book which he sent to chosen personalities in Egypt.
9. Tizini's view of Bennabi was expressed in the introduction to his book *Mina at-Turath ila at-Thawrah (From Tradition to Revolution)*, published in Damascus in the mid 1970s.
10. Fahmī Jad'ān: *Usus at-Taḡaddum 'inda Mufakkirī al-Islām fi'l 'Ālam al-'Arabī al-Hadith (Foundations of Progress as seen by Islamist Thinkers in the Modern Arab World)*. Amman: Dar ash-Shuruq, 1988, 3rd edn., p.416.
11. Fawzia Bariun: *Malik Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia [ABIM], 1993, p. 113.
12. An attempt in this direction is to be found in Mohamed T. El-Mesawi: *A Muslim Theory on Human Society: An Investigation into the Sociological Thought of Malik Bennabi* (Forthcoming).
13. Bennabi's autobiography was first published in French, Algiers 1966. It consisted of two separate volumes; volume one: *L 'Efant (The Child)* volume two: *L 'Etudiant (The Student)*. An Arabic translation by Marwan Qanawati of the first volume was published in 1969 in Beirut.

Realizing the inaccuracy of this translation to properly convey what he meant, Bennabi took it upon himself to translate the second volume, and its Arabic version was also published in Beirut in 1970.

As the Syrian publishing firm Dar al-Fikr undertook since the late 1970s the reproduction of Bennabi's complete works under the series title *Problems of Civilization*, Bennabi's memoirs have been published in one single volume; the translation of the first volume was revised and adapted in accordance with Bennabi's Arabic style in the second volume by his intimate pupil and friend Omar Kamil Masqawi (presently attorney general in the Lebanese government). Cf. Masqawi's introduction to Bennabi's autobiography *Mudhakkiratu Shahidin lil 'Qarn*, Damascus:

Dar al-Fikr 1984, pp. 7-8.

14. It is assumed by some writers and researchers that Bennabi left a number of manuscripts which include a sequence and third part to his published two-volume autobiography.

These manuscripts also include the following titles: The Government of A Muslim Society, The Jewish Problem, Judaism or Christianity?, A Study of Christianity, A Model of The Revolutionary Process, The Rottenness. Cf. *Al-Faysal* (A monthly journal published in Saudi Arabia), No. 196 (Special Issue on Malik Bennabi), Editor's introduction, p. 7. There are also numerous talks and lectures by Bennabi stored in tapes and scattered with a number of his students and friends in Algeria and elsewhere.

Although a number of good works have appeared dealing with the biographical aspect of Bennabi scholarship, the information they provide on Bennabi's mature life leaves much to be desired. Even for his childhood and youth, such work remain dependent on Bennabi's published autobiography. Cf. Bariun *op cit*.

15. Namely: *Le Phénomène Coranique* (1946), *Les Conditions de La Renaissance* (1948), *La Vocation de L 'Islam* (1954), *L 'Afro-Asiatisme* (1957), *Mushkilatu 'th-Thaqāfah* (1958) and *Le Probleme des Idees dans Le Monde Musulman* (1970).
16. It is interesting to note here that the main contribution of the Islamization of knowledge school has been to put more emphasis on the epistemological and methodological dimensions of that awareness and to provide it systematically with an institutional framework in the form of research centres and academic journals.
17. Bennabi, M.: *Al-Muslim fi 'Ālam al-Iqtisād* (*The Muslim in the Realm of Economics*), Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1987, p. 60.
18. Bennabi, M.: *Les Conditions de la Renaissance*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
19. Bennabi, M.: *Pour Changer l'Algérie*, Algiers: Société d'Édition et de Communication, n. d., p.10.
20. Bennabi, M.: *Bayna 'r-Rashādi wat-Tih* (*Between Rationality and Bewilderness*), Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1992, p. 43.
21. *Ibid*, p.9-16

MALIK BENNABI
ON THE ORIGINS OF
HUMAN SOCIETY

Preface

This is part of a more comprehensive work which we intend to publish under the title: *Birth of Society*. Yet, because of the specific character it has within the context of that work, we have preferred to publish it separately under the subtitle: *The Social Relations Network*.

As a matter of fact, it systematically includes, by virtue of the title itself, the theoretical concepts which concern the historical factors upon which the *birth of society* depends.

Therefore, it is necessary and appropriate to deal with this phenomenon in universal terms before addressing it at the particular level of the Islamic society.

This will allow us, as is always the case in the introductory part of such works, to define in this study the terminology that shall be used, notably the term *society*; at the same time, we believe that we would have responded to the desire of the Muslim reader at a time when he is endeavouring to re-enter the scene of history after he has just overcome the major crisis of his history of the past few centuries— the history of his long slumber with which we are well acquainted. He is thus attempting to perform his concerted action anew as he did when he was the torchbearer of civilization.

With this in mind, we wish to invite the Muslim reader to reflect on that phase of the history of human society when it is born or when it rises up by showing that the genuine renaissance always manifests itself in a social phenomenon depicted in the following famous *ḥadīth*:

*"Never would the affairs of the later generations of this Ummah be set on the right path except by that which guided its early generations."*¹

MALIK BENNABI

Cairo: April 11, 1962

Translator's Note

1. This is not a Prophetic *hadīth* as the author's words might imply. Rather, it is a statement made by Imam Malik ibn Anas, the great *faqīh* of Medina, when asked whether it was permissible to collectively read the Qur'an in the mosque after the congregational prayers and make *du'a* (supplication) in a specific 'chorus-like' manner. His answer was: "This was not known by the early generations of Islam, it is but an invention." Then he commented: "Never will the later generations of the ummah bring better guidance than that bequeathed [to them] by the early generation."

In this respect, see Abdul Halim al-Jundi: *Mālik Ibn Anas*, p. 179, Dar al-M'arif, Cairo (n.d.). In fact, the meaning of the comment of Imam Malik is clearly implied by the *hadīth* in which the Prophet peace be upon him says: "I have left for you two things after which you will never get astray: the Book of Allah Almighty and my Sunnah," meaning that the Muslims will never be misguided or go astray so long as they follow the instructions and teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. See *Al-Muwatta* by Imam Malik.

This *hadīth* is reported by al-Hakim in his *al-Mustadrak* on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

Preliminaries

Unlike the natural sciences, human sciences have not yet achieved such a level of maturity as to provide universally applicable definitions for their concepts and terms. In sociology, for example, there are concepts which are sometimes a matter of confusion and ambiguity in the reader's mind, especially the Muslim reader's, for we find that the national languages in Muslim lands have not assimilated such new concepts/terms in a comprehensive and proper manner.

As a result, the confusion and ambiguity of concepts/terms might lead to literary rather than scientific debates such as the dispute that arose, and is still going on, in Arab intellectual circles, with regard to the concepts of 'culture' and 'civilization' (*hadārah and madaniyyah*). Rather than helping to clarify the problem, such debates render it even more complex and difficult.

It is therefore worthwhile to first set out the theoretical framework of our subject, *birth of society*, before investigating it from a universal and historical perspective. Hence, it is appropriate, at the outset of our investigation, to point out the diversity of social phenomena to which the term *society* can be applied. First, we should point out the fundamental difference between, on the one hand, *the natural or primitive society* which has not changed in any tangible manner the characteristics of its personality since it came into existence and, on the other, the *historical society* which, born in a given primary situation, has subsequently transformed its fundamental features in accordance with the laws that have governed its evolution.

The natural or primitive society thus represents the type of a stationary society with unchangeable characteristics, such as the 'societies' found in the colonies of ants and bees. The African tribe of the pre-colonial era and the Arab tribe of the *jāhili* (pre-Islamic) period are representative of this type.

In contrast, the historical society represents a dynamic society; that is, the society which has been subject to the laws of change thus radically modifying its features and landmarks.

Nevertheless, this type is not uniform in nature. It rather varies in terms of both its genesis and structure. Actually, the historical society may come into existence in two different ways:

- a. It may, from the beginning, be made up of new elements, i.e., elements which have not undergone any previous historical transformation. Such a society is made up of components which are still in their state of nature. In like manner were formed the early historical societies during the Agricultural Revolution in the New Stone Age.¹
- b. This historical society may also be formed by elements which have been left by a previous society which disintegrated because of its age and senility, or because of its expansion. Likewise, these elements are ready to enter into the constitution of a new society.

The borrowing may be the result of a migration that would displace such elements from their mother-society, such as the migration movement which was at the origin of the present American society whose constituent elements had been borrowed from a civilized society which was in a state of expansion—the European society in the 16th century. Such migration movement was also at the origin of the Eskimo society whose components had been derived from the Sino-Mongolian society of the Far East.

Further, the borrowing process may occur in another way

when it takes the form of restructuring the remnants of a society or societies which have disappeared as was the case with the Roman society which derived, in the process of its formation, many elements from the Gallic and Carthaginian societies² after they had disappeared in the aftermath of the battles of Alesia³ and Zama⁴ respectively, and also from the Egyptian society after the victory of Caesar⁵ over Ptolemy.⁶

However, the advent of a historical society is not incidental whatever the means of its genesis and construction. It is rather the result of a continuous process of transformation to which both the borrowing and lending societies contribute. The occurrence of this process is in accordance with a universal theoretical scheme which, by necessity, includes the following factors:

1. The historical source of the process of perpetual change.
2. The elements which may be transformed, through the above mentioned process, from a pre-social into a social stage.
3. The universal laws and norms which govern the process of change.

By examining the first point we find that the historical society is also subject to degrees of variation related to the historical circumstances of its birth. From this it follows that there are two kinds of historical societies:

- a. The historical society whose birth takes place in response to the challenges posed by the natural circumstances of its environment [on a human group], whether that environment has itself undergone a sudden transformation or whether it has been confronted by the conditions of a new environment; such is the *geographical type of society*.
- b. The historical society which comes into existence in response to the appeal of a certain ideal. Such is the

ideological society.

To the first type belongs, for instance, the present American society for it is the result of a European migration in which people had to adapt to the natural conditions of the New Continent.

The story of the [historical] experience which led to the birth of this society has been recently shown in a series of movies which depict the people's life in the American Far-West through the personality of the hero Beauvalobyle. These movies have nurtured the imagination of the present European generation and inspired it in such a manner that the cowboys' dress has been chosen as the formal uniform of the scout movement.

In contrast, the Islamic society belongs to the second type, and so does the early European society for it was, generally speaking, a result of the Christian faith. The present Soviet and Chinese societies can also be seen as instances of this model.

In addition to this historical variation which concerns the genesis of human society, we must point out that there is also a variation which originates from the very structure of the society.

In this connection we should distinguish between the societies whose structure is based on several layers from those societies based on one layer only.

The Islamic society which is the particular subject of our investigation was an embodiment of the one-layer society type, i.e., its structure involved a homogeneous form which was more or less in accord with the Prophetic *hadīth*:

*"A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other."*⁷

In fact, this *hadīth* depicts in a precise way the status of the Islamic society during the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

It should be mentioned, however, that the picture of the Islamic society which we have tried to trace here has nothing to do with the doctrinal movement which historically divided it into schools and groups. Rather, it is the picture of a democratic society which could preserve in its tendencies and aspirations, if not in its institutions, the essence of democracy since it was a classless society.

On the other hand, the Brahmanic society is representative of the multi-layer structured society, a society divided into super-imposed castes, as is the case even in modern India in spite of Ghandi's efforts [to carry out social reform]; whereas, the European society in the 19th century provides another example of the super-imposed-layers structured society.

The foregoing examples are sufficient to underscore the historical and structural variation of human society, the subject matter of our investigation. However, there are a number of characteristics common to all the above mentioned types. Regardless of its historical or structural type, a society is not a mere aggregate of individuals brought together in a given social framework thanks to the group or herd instinct.

This herd instinct is rather a means and not a cause in the genesis of a society, for the latter includes more than the mere agglomeration of individuals who would give it its outward shape. It involves a number of *constant fundamentals* to which a society is indebted for its continuity more or less independently of its individual members.

We can further elaborate on the subject as follows:

First: It might happen that a society loses its character under some historical circumstances and thus disappears from the historical scene. Yet, its individual members may not be affected. Rather, every individual would still preserve the instinct and disposition to live in a group,

which is a factor that marks man's nature as a social being. In such a situation, the individuals become mere remnants of an extinct society, and thus they are ready to be integrated into a new social entity.

For instance, the Gallic society disappeared at the aftermath of the battle of Alesia, but the Gallic people as individuals did not disappear. On the contrary, they were transformed into a material ready to be incorporated in the construction of a new social body.

Second: It might happen that all the individuals of a given generation in a society disappear at the same time. Nevertheless, the society would remain, thus preserving its character intact as well as fulfilling its role in history.⁸ Moreover, it would impose on the newcomers, no matter how alien and different they might be, its own genius as well as its norms and traditions. Such was the case when the Chinese society assimilated the Manshu and Mongol⁹ tribes which invaded the Chinese empire.

Likewise, human society bears in itself specific characteristics which enable it to preserve its character and fulfil its function in history. These constant factors constitute the essence of the social being for they determine the age of a society as well as its stability and cohesion over time; they also enable it to face all the circumstances of its history.

This essence is ultimately embodied in the social relations network which links the members of the society to one another. More importantly, it confers guidance and orientation upon the various aspects of the individuals' activities towards the fulfilment of a universal function, which is the very vocation of society.

Translator's Notes

1. New Stone Age, or Neolithic Age: The chronological division of Old World prehistory into three successive ages of Stone, Bronze and Iron, is known as the *Three-Age System*. This scheme owes its archaeological exploration to the Dane, Christian Jurgensen Thomsen (1788-1865) who adopted it in 1819 to classify the collections of the New National Museum in Copenhagen. It became widely influential a generation later in the English publication of Thomsen's *A Guide to Northern Antiquities* (1836).

The subdivision of the Stone Age into the Malacolithic (Old Stone) Age, characterized by chipped stone, and the Neolithic (New Stone) Age, characterized by polished stone tools, stems from the English archaeologist Sir John Lubbocks' work *Prehistoric Times* (1865).

2. a. Gallic: of or relating to ancient Gaul or the Gauls, Gaul being a region in Roman times stretching from what is now N. Italy to the S. Netherlands. To Gaul are related the *Gallic Wars* which is the name traditionally given to Julius Caesar's campaigns (58-59BC) against the Celtic tribes of Gaul. These wars were also the occasion of Caesar's two unsuccessful invasions of Britain.

b. Carthaginian: of or relating to Carthage (36 54 N 10 16E); ancient town in Tunisia (N. Africa); a world heritage site; reputedly founded by the Phoenicians (who came from Phoenicia, the narrow strip of the E. Mediterranean between the mountains of Lebanon and the Sea) in 814 BC; destroyed by Rome following the Punic Wars, 146 BC; refounded by Caesar and Octavian; restored as capital by the Vandals.

3. Alesia: is the ancient name for Mont Auxois, a hill on the Côte d'Or in France. Alesia was the strongly fortified encampment where Vercingetorix, the Gallic chief of the Arverni, made his last stand against Julius Caesar. This battle in 52 BC concluded the Roman conquest of Gaul. The Gallic chief was executed in Rome in 46 BC after 6 years of detainment. A colossal statue of Vercingetorix, erected in the mid-19th century by Napoleon III, stands on Mont Auxois.

4. Zama, a town in ancient North Africa where, according to tradition, the Roman army of Scipio Africanus crushed the Carthaginian army of Hannibal in 202 BC. This crucial battle marked the end of the power of Carthage. By the terms of the peace of 201 BC, Carthage lost its fleet and thereafter could fight, even in Africa, only with Roman approval. Ancient Zama is generally identified with the present village of Jama Ljam in Tunisia.

5. Caesar, Gaius Julius (100-44 BC), Roman politician of patrician origins but slender means, whose military genius, as displayed in the Gallic Wars (58-51 BC), enabled Rome to extend her empire permanently to the Atlantic seaboard, but whose ruthless ambition led to the breakdown of the Republican system of government at home.

In the year 60 BC he joined with Pompey and Crassus (the so-called Triumvirate) to protect his interests in the state, and in 49 BC, to avoid being humbled by his enemies at Rome, he led his army across the Rubicon River into Italy and plunged

the state into civil war.

6. In the original Arabic text of Bennabi, the name referred to as being that of the Egyptian ruler defeated by Caesar is *Yūmī*. This name does not however appear in the references I have consulted.

The following is a brief historical account that may throw some light on this point: In 48 BC Caesar, victorious in the battle of Pharsalus which opposed him to Pompey during the Roman Civil War, followed his adversary (i.e. Pompey) who had fled to Egypt.

Arriving in Alexandria, then Capital of Ptolemaic Egypt, Caesar defeated Ptolemy XIII who had succeeded to the throne together with his sister Cleopatra VII in 51 BC. After the defeat of her brother Ptolemy, Cleopatra is said to have had some relationship with Caesar who supported her to restore her position as Queen of Egypt. As a result of this relationship, she gave birth to a boy known as Caesarian or Ptolemy XV.

Cleopatra's liaisons first with Caesar and second with Mark Antony could only postpone the fall of Egypt to Rome. But after the defeat of Cleopatra and Antony at Actium in 31 BC, followed by their suicide in 30, Egypt came under full Roman rule and thus the rule of the Ptolemaic dynasty came to an end as previously did that of the Pharaohs when Alexander the Great invaded Egypt in 332 BC.

For more details, see, for example, *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 5, p. 136-7, and vol. 22, p. 741.

7. Reported by Imām al-Bukhārī on the authority of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī in 'Kitāb al-Adab' in his *Sahih* (chapter 36, p.3, vol.VII; English translation by Dr. Muhammad M.Khan, Kazi Publications, Lahore, 4th edition, 1979), and by Imam Muslim in 'Kitāb al-Birr' in his *Sahih*.
8. By this statement, Bennabi seems to take a realist, rather than a nominalist, view of human society. The issue, long debated by sociologists, revolves around the following questions: (1) Does human society, as a collective whole, have an objective and real existence with its own properties, apart from the individuals who make it up? or (2) Is it an epiphenomenon or a mere nominal entity with no properties of its own? Yet Bennabi's position with regard to this issue is far more complex than might be implied by this statement. For a full discussion of his position, see Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi: *A Muslim Theory of Human Society* (Forthcoming).
9. a. Manshu: originally a people of Tartar stock from Manshuria (an area that included present-day Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang) who ruled all China from 1644 to 1911 under the Qing dynasty. (Manshuria: Former region of NE China; mountainous area, sparsely populated by nomadic tribes).
b. Mongol: of or relating to the Mongols, a general name applied to the tribes of C. Asia and S. Siberia who affected the violent collapse of the Abbasid empire before converting to Islam. United under Genghis Khan in 1206, they conquered China under his grand-son Kublan, who ruled as first emperor of the Yan dynasty (1271-1368).

Species and Society

We have attempted above to circumscribe the meaning of the term *society* from the historical perspective which concerns the underpinnings and roots of the social being and existence as well as from the structural perspective pertaining to its constitution and formation.

We shall now try to define our subject from the functional viewpoint. The term *society* refers, in the ordinary lexical meaning, to 'an association of individuals who have common habits and customs, live under the rule of the same legal system and share common interests.'

This is only an outward descriptive definition which does not provide any explanation as to the historical function fulfilled by such an association, nor does it give any information about its internal organization which enables it to fulfil such a function.

Therefore, it is necessary to set the boundaries and scope of our subject as clearly as possible.

Hence, we must substitute that descriptive definition with a dialectical one. In other words, *we should define the meaning of (society) with reference to the (time) factor.*

It should be mentioned at the outset that the association of individuals whose internal relations have not been modified and whose activities do not change with the passage of time does not fall into the category of the specific association meant here by the term society. The human groups labelled, since the time of Levy-Bruhl,¹ as '*primitive societies*' whose life does not change

its form (like the colonies of ants which remain unchanged for thousands of years) do not also conform to our definition. The life of such groups still reflects a bygone stage which mankind had already undergone in the pre-historical age. In such a status, their social characteristics become fossilized and there is hardly any variation in them from one stage of history to another. If we examine, for example, two sectors of their social life separated by thousands of years we will discover that they are quite the same as has been observed by ethnologists who study at present the human life in some countries of Tropical Africa.

Because any change which affects the structural features of a given human group or its cultural orientation is a direct consequence of its historical function and vocation, any group which does not progress and adjust itself in the course of time does not therefore conform to the dialectical definition given here to the term 'society'.

However, it must be noticed that even the groups which are still in such a stage of evolution are in turn moving towards integration with the "global" society which is unfolding in our age under the influence of technological forces which have introduced the notion of globalism and universalism² into the cultural life of the 20th century. Be that as it may, a *society* is a group of human individuals which starts evolving from a certain point in time which we can call *birth*.

Moreover, when we talk about a specific *birth* in human socio-cultural affairs, we imply the occurrence of an event marking the advent of a form of collective life as well as indicating the starting point of the process of transformation which human collective life undergoes. This form of life comes into existence in the form of a new order of relations between the individuals of a certain group. Yet, this new form of collective life may start with a single man who represents in this case the nucleus of the society which is to be born in the future.

This is the meaning implied by the term *ummah* as it is attributed by the glorious Qur'an to Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham), peace be upon him, in the following verse: "*Verily Ibrahim was an ummah.*" (Qur'an, 16:120).³ In this case, we find that the society/*ummah* is embodied in "one single person", i.e., it is a mere potential of future change, it is still a potentiality contained in an idea which is personified in such a person.

Thus, in order to delimit the boundaries of our subject in a systematic way, we have to link it to the factor of time in such a manner that the latter is given its full psycho-sociological significance. Accordingly, it follows that a society is a *group of human beings which perpetually changes its social features by creating itself the means of change, and which perceives the objectives it seeks to achieve through such a process of change.*

Since the time scientists studied the isomers, it has become an established truth that organisms may have the same chemical elements without their features being similar. Scientists have deduced from this phenomenon that the set of atoms in such organisms is not a mere mass of matter, but it is rather the pattern and structure according to which that matter is organized. Differences in the properties of chemical elements are due, in actuality, to differences in [their] internal structure or, in a clearer expression, to differences in their internal engineering.

This also holds true for human society since a society cannot be seen as a mere association of individuals. Rather, it is a specific organism based on a given pattern and bearing a human nature.

In its broad lines and in accordance with what has preceded, this pattern consists of three major factors:

1. Movement as a characteristic feature of the human group.
2. Generation of the means of movement.

3. Function and direction of this movement.

Any human group is indebted to these three factors for the social features by which it becomes a society in the scientific meaning of the term.

In fact, the idea of movement which is actually equivalent to that of change and evolution is a fundamental component of the definition in sociology. It is this very idea which enabled us in another study to distinguish between the meanings of *capital* and *wealth*, in the sense that the first carries the meaning of a flexible property, whereas the second carries the meaning of a static property.⁴

The idea of movement will henceforth help us in this study to distinguish between a society and all forms of human association which do not bear the social characteristics we pointed out earlier.

Moreover, the idea of movement in sociology entails a twofold significance to the effect that the evolution of a group either leads it to a higher form of collective life or, on the contrary, to a state of backwardness.

At any rate, every society has an end-point before it. Its evolution either leads it to progress and civilization or to decline and decadence.

On the contrary, we find that when a human group stops moving, it ultimately loses its history and thereby becomes a purposeless entity.

These are, in the final analysis, the criteria which will enable us to address the problem of the birth of human society by stating that *the human group acquires the quality of society when it starts moving, that is to say, when it begins changing itself in order to achieve its goals. This event coincides, in the historical perspective, with the moment when a civilization*

emerges.

Stationary groups, by contrast, lead an aimless collective life thus denoting the status of pre-civilization.

To conclude, it should be stated that it is nature that provides the species, whereas it is history that creates the society. The purpose of nature is simply to preserve the existence of the species, whereas the purpose of history is to lead the course of evolution towards higher forms of collective life which we call civilization.

Translator's Notes

1. Levy-Bruhl, Lucien (1857-1939), French philosopher and anthropologist, born in Paris. Educated at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and appointed to a chair in the history of modern philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1904. He published his book *La Morale, Science des Mœurs* in 1903. He went on to develop a theory of primitive mentality in his book *La Mentalité Primitive* (1922). He believed that the mentality of primitive people was essentially mystical and prelogical, differing in kind from the rational and logical thought of the modern West. This view drew him into sharp exchange with the French sociologist Emile Durkheim.
2. The issue of cultural globalism or globalization of culture has received remarkable attention from Bennabi as early as the late 1950s. See Malik Bennabi's *Mushkilat ath-Thaqāfah (The Problem of Culture)*, Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 1984, (4th reprint), pp.113-128.
3. I have preferred the literal rendition of the Qur'ānic verse for it helps in highlighting the point the author tries to bring home. The meaning of the verse as rendered by Muhammad Asad is as follows: "Verily, Abraham was a man who combined within himself all virtues". *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1984), p. 415.
4. See the author's discussion of this topic where he draws the distinction between the concept of 'capital' and the notion of 'wealth' both economically and sociologically in his book *Les Conditions de La Renaissance* (pp. 50 - 57 of the French original, published by S.E.C. Algiers 1992; and pp. 117-122 of the Arabic version: *Shurūt an-Nahda*, published by Dar al Fikr, 4th ed., Damascus, 1987), chapter 'Orientation of Capital'.

Different Interpretations of the Historical Movement

The considerations advanced in the preceding chapter link the concept of society to a dynamic pattern which consists of three principles:

- a. Perpetual movement.
- b. Continuous creation of its causes.
- c. Its purpose.

Nevertheless, this schema might confine us in a vicious circle, that of the egg-and-chicken dilemma, were we to concern ourselves with investigating about which of them is the cause of the other's existence.

If we maintain that it is movement that creates its causes, we will be facing a flagrant contradiction, because our dynamic schema provides us only with the picture of a society in the course of action and does not thus provide any explanation for the primary conditions of this action.

As a matter of fact, every human environment involves a certain degree of inertia just as is the case in an environment consisting of matter. At the level of the individuals, this state of inertia is often expressed in different ways such as laziness, lack of energy, lack of will, etc.; whereas one could refer to it, at the collective level as, stagnation, depression, backwardness etc.

To formulate the issue in terms of the laws of classical

mechanics, this would mean that every human environment which is integrated to its movement and which creates the factors thereof comprises a fundamental element which dominates the natural inborn inertia by transforming all the factors of lethargy and inactivity within a given environment into active dynamic values.

This phenomenon has been interpreted in different ways by a number of scholars.

Hegel,¹ for instance, attributes the causes which determine every historical movement, i.e., every social change, to the principle of contradiction between *thesis* and *anti-thesis*. In his view, when movement is generated by the conflicting forces, its outcome occurs in the form of a necessary infusion or *synthesis*!

These are, according to Hegel, the three phases which govern every historical movement and which ultimately constitute the process of social change. Accordingly, the situation where a human group stands at a given moment of its history represents, in his view, a *thesis*.

However, a number of forces of an economic, moral or climatic nature may interfere in the course of the historical movement striving to change its direction. Then, under the influence of mutual actions and reactions, the human milieu is ultimately transformed in such a manner that it would include the stagnant trends inherent to its inborn inertia, and the dynamic trends which gradually generate a contradictory state representing the *anti-thesis*.

Thus, the principle of contradiction represents, in Hegel's opinion, the driving force which gives rise to the historical movement whose nature consists in generating its own causes.

Synthesis is the culmination of the pattern depicted above which renews its cycle whenever there is a new conflict that convulses the prevailing old equilibrium.

Moreover, the interpretation of the notion of conflict has itself been a matter of dispute among many contemporary schools of thought.

In this respect, a Marxist scholar would argue that the contradictory factors which generate social change are primarily economic in nature. From this it follows that the birth of society as well as the model of civilization it engenders are consequent upon the conflict of the economic forces.

Nonetheless, if we apply to this doctrine its own economic criteria, the limits of its expansion on the economic map of the world will clearly be revealed to us as follows. Looking at the Marxist movement as representative of an economic phenomenon will lead us to the conclusion that it actually corresponds to an economic zone where the average per capita income approximately oscillates between \$200 and \$700,² thus representing the levels achieved by Japan and England respectively.

On this ground, we can ascertain that, unless the contrary is proven, the expansion of the communist doctrine is confined to the economic frontiers which correspond to certain geographical boundaries and that, beyond these limits, the Marxist thought has failed to meet with the conditions favourable for its adaptation. Therefore, it cannot provide us with a reasonable interpretation that can be soundly applied to the areas where it has not spread.

Interestingly, this statement itself implicitly leads us to John Arnold Toynbee's³ theory which accurately defines the limits within which social change takes place. Toynbee's theory shows the reasons why the expansion of the Marxist doctrine has been confined to specific areas on the world economic map!

The great English historian has espoused a methodology which partly concurs with the theoretical scheme of Hegel in that

he identifies the notion of conflict with that of an obstacle bearing an economic or a technical aspect to which he assigns the term *challenge*. In his opinion, the challenge imposes itself on the conscience of both the individual and the group. The response to such a challenge is proportional to the importance and degree of stimulation it generates. Thus, there is a symmetry between the nature of stimulation and the attitude that the [human] conscience adopts as a response.

Accordingly, if we assume that the *challenge* is so weak that it does not attain a certain level, the *response* to it will be weak as well. In other words, there will be no need for such a response and consequently the challenge will lose its importance as a factor of social change.

On the other hand, there is a limit from which evolves what Toynbee calls the *optimum challenge* which entails the *sufficient response* capable of motivating the forces of change. The efficacy of the response will grow proportionally with the severity of the challenge until *the challenge* reaches a certain level. If the *challenge* keeps growing beyond a specific [i.e. optimum] level, it will fail to generate any response for it will rather create a state of *impossibility* which the human conscience and power will be unable to surmount. The response in such a situation will be inefficient and, therefore, of no avail.

Likewise, Toynbee places the process of social change between two limits beyond which it does not occur—a situation which is due to insufficiency emanating from the lack of challenge on the one hand, and to excessiveness stemming from the severity of challenge beyond a certain level, on the other.

In this way, the great English historian explains the major stages of the history of mankind. He believes that the reason why some human groups have remained in a stationary situation, thus not embodying *a society* in the technical meaning of this term, is due to one of two possibilities: either the challenge was not

sufficient to stimulate their energies to respond to it, or else these groups had altogether withdrawn from facing the challenge. He supplies examples to support his interpretation.

In this connection, he mentions the case of the people who had emigrated to the Upper Nile area in the wake of the New Stone Age and who could not bring about any change in their life conditions ever since, because they had actually failed to face the harsh requirements of the challenge. In contrast, their fellow humans who were living in the lower valley of the Nile chose to respond to the challenge which the natural environment had imposed upon them and thereby they succeeded to change totally the conditions of their life. Thus they were able to establish the first civilized society which human history has ever recorded.

The English historian also mentions the case of the Eskimos who are at present regarded as representative of a human group which has not adjusted itself to the conditions of its environment because the natural challenge, overpowering its capabilities, has doomed it to a form of stationary existence.

In light of the previous examples, Toynbee attempted to show us how the insufficiency as well as the excessiveness and severity of the 'challenge' affected in the same direction the forces of the history of mankind.

As far as we are concerned, we are to some extent in a position to reformulate the point of view expounded by Toynbee in light of the glorious Qur'an. Because his theory does not help us to attain a consistent interpretation of the movement which led to the rise of the Islamic society as well as of its historical vocation, we can rather explain this movement by attributing it to the psychological factors which gave impetus to the spiritual forces of that society, i.e., the conditions of its movement throughout the centuries.

The Qur'an places the conscience of the Muslim between

two limits: **promise** [wa'd] and **warning** [wa'id]. This means that this conscience is placed under the most favourable conditions for it to respond to a challenge which is spiritual in essence.

Thus, while **warning** is the lowest level beneath which there is no room for any effective effort or action, **promise** is the highest level beyond which any effort or action is impossible, for in such a situation the severity of the challenge overpowers the spiritual strength man is endowed with.

Likewise, it follows that the Muslim conscience is placed between the two limits of effective action. These two limits are implied by the following two Qur'anic verses:

1. **Warning:** "*Can they, then, ever feel secure from God's deep devising? But none feel secure from God's deep devising save people who are (already) lost.*" (Qur'an, 7: 99).
2. **Promise:** "*Verily, none but people who deny the truth can ever lose hope of God's life-giving mercy.*" (Qur'an, 12: 87).

Between these two limits, the spiritual strength stands in proportion to the efficient effort furnished by a society which acts according to the dictates of a mission, that is to say, according to the requirements of its objectives. It was in this spiritual state that Bilal, Allah be pleased with him, could endure all sorts of torture inflicted on his body in such a manner that we witnessed him, at the peak of his sufferings, raising his finger and repeating in a defiant manner his response to the challenge of Quraysh: *Ahad, Ahad*.⁴ No power on earth could, for it is above the capability of any worldly power to, bring down his finger because his soul was, despite the fact that his body was subjected to the utmost torture, submerged in an indescribable realm of light: *the promise of the Eternal Reality*. Similarly, the

story of the woman who requested the Prophet, peace be upon him, to implement the *hadd* punishment of adultery on her shows us the importance of the divine warning as to the orientation of the psychological energies in a given situation.⁵

Both stories clearly show that, situated between the two limits of *promise* and *warning*, the historical movement is always purpose-oriented aspiring towards the *sublime*.

Consequently, the spiritual strength lies between the two states of the soul beyond which there are only indolence and slackness on one side, and despair and incapacity on the other.

Interestingly, the glorious Qur'an exhibits an attractive picture of the two limits that embrace the fruitful historical action stating that:

"And thus it is: if We let man taste some of Our grace and then take it away from him—behold, he abandons all hope, forgetting all gratitude (for Our past favours). And thus it is: if We let him taste ease and plenty after hardship has visited him, he is sure to say, 'Gone is all affliction from me!'—for, behold, he is given to vain exultation, and glories only in himself." (Qur'an, 11: 9-10).

Translator's Notes

1. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770-1831). With Kant, whose system he modified, the greatest of the German idealist philosophers, born in Stuttgart. In the *Kritische Journal der Philosophie* which he edited with Schelling (1802-3), he outlined his system with its emphasis on reason rather than the romantic intuitionism of Schelling, which he attacked in his first major work *The Phenomenology of the Mind* (1807). His approach rejects the reality of the finite and separate objects and minds in space and time, and establishes an underlying all-embracing unite, the Absolute. The quest for greater unity and Truth is achieved by the famous dialectic, positing something (*thesis*), denying it (*antithesis*), and combining the two half-truths in a *synthesis* which contains a greater portion of truth in its complexity.

2. It has to be mentioned that these figures refer to the situation in 1961 when Bennabi was writing the book.
3. Toynbee, Arnold (John) (1889-1975). British historian, born in London. Served in the Foreign Office in both World Wars and attended the Paris conferences (1919 and 1946). He was professor of modern Greek and Byzantine history at London (1919-24) and director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London (1925-55). His major work is the 10-volume *Study of History* (1934 -54).
4. *Ahad, Ahad* (God is one, God is one): this was the word uttered by Bilāl under torture he and other early Makkan Muslims such as Yasir and Sumayyah were subjected to by the Makkan *mushrikun* (pagans) chiefs like Abū Jahl. He thus was pointing to the fundamental principle of the Islamic faith, *Tawhīd* or unity of God. See Muhammad Husein Haykal: *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. Ismā'īl Rajī al Farūqī (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1996), p. 91.
5. The story of the Muslim lady who requested the Prophet peace be upon him to implement the *hadd* punishment of adultery on her is reported by many compilers of *hadīth* like Imam Muslim (No 1695) and Imām Abū Dāwūd (No 4433 and 4449) on the authority of Buraydah. This story is also reported by Imām Tirmidhi (No 1435) and Imām an-Nasā'ī (v. 4/6) on the authority of 'Imrān Ibn Husayn.

History and Social Relations

As seen earlier, the concept of the *historical movement* is explained in different ways. A historian like Toynbee would emphasize, as an explanatory factor, the influence of the natural environment, whereas a sociologist could, based on the teachings of the Marxian school, for example, accord primacy to the influence of the economic forces.

After all, we find in the last analysis that the working and dynamism of the historical movement in its reality emanates from psychological factors which, in turn, originate from certain spiritual forces. It is these spiritual forces that make of the soul the driving force in the history of mankind.

Along this line, we could find in the early 19th century one of the great historians, Guizot,¹ who, in his analysis of the historical movements in Europe, looked at them in both sociological and psychological terms. The renowned French historian contended that history, in its capacity as the science of what has actually happened, can deal with its subject matter in two ways: either it identifies its field of study at the level of the individual himself, including all that affects his life and generates change in his human qualities, or it identifies it at the level of the environment in which the individual lives, that is to say all that affects the life of society and generates change in its features and landmarks.²

Anyway, history is but the change which affects both the *self* and the environment which surrounds it. It is, as sociology teaches us, the continuous *collective* activity carried out by the

persons, ideas and objects and which is thus engraved in the memory of time.

To put it more precisely and clearly, we can say that the making of history results from the interaction of three social categories:

- a. The *realm of persons*,
- b. The *realm of ideas* and
- c. The *realm of objects*.

These *realms* do not act separately from one another. They are rather incorporated in a concerted action whose pattern is determined by ideological archetypes which originate from the *realm of ideas* so as to be applied by means of the *realm of objects* to achieve objectives specified by the *realm of persons*.

Accordingly, any historical action is necessarily the outcome of dynamic interplay between *persons*, *ideas* and *objects*. This obviously implies that no historical action can be achieved without the existence of a set of relations which are necessary to link together the components of each of the three realms as well as these *realms* to one another so as to mould them into an integrated whole for the sake of a concerted action.

Moreover, since the unity of such a historical action is a necessity, so too is the conformity between this unity and its finality as manifested in the form of a *civilization*. This situation logically implies the existence of a *fourth* realm which represents the sum-total of the necessary social relations or what we call the *social relations network*.

We pointed out earlier that human society is not a mere aggregate of individuals but that it is rather the subscription of these individuals to one and the same direction in order to fulfil a specific purposive function. We must here add that such an action is not merely a matter of "spontaneous" assemblage of the

persons, ideas and objects. It is, on the contrary, the synthesization of these social realms in such a way that the outcome thereof will actualize, both in scope and direction, the transformation of the aspects of life or, more correctly, the evolution of human society.

Translator's Notes

1. Guizot, Francois-Pierre-Guillaume (1787-1874), French historian and politician; professor, Paris (1812); proponent of constitutional monarchy; elected deputy (1830); minister of interior (1830), education (1832-37); foreign minister (1840-47), premier of France (1847-48); forced into retirement by the Revolution of 1848. Author of *Histoire de la Civilization en Europe* (1828), *Histoire de la Civilization en France* (1829-32), *Histoire des Origines du Mouvement Représentatif* (1851) and *Memoires pour Servir a l'Histoire de mon Temps* (1857-67).

2. It is a fact that Bennabi does not provide any bibliographical reference while presenting the views of many thinkers. The views of Francois Guizot are no exception. Yet, it is most likely that Guizot's views referred to here are those expressed in his book *The History of Civilization in Europe*, first translated into English in 1846 and republished by the Penguin Group in 1997.

It will be worthwhile quoting the relevant paragraph here: ".....it is evident", says Guizot, "that the history of civilization might be treated in two methods, drawn from two sources, considered under two different aspects. The historian might place himself in the heart of the human mind for a given period, a series of ages, or among a determinate people; he might study, describe, relate all the events, all the transformations, all the revolutions, which had been accomplished in the internal man..... He may proceed in another manner: instead of penetrating the internal man, he may take his stand—he may place himself in the midst of the world; instead of describing the vicissitudes of the ideas, the sentiments of the individual being, he may describe external facts, the events, the changes of the social state. These two portions, these two histories of civilization, are closely connected with each other; they are the reflections—the image of each other" (*History*.. p.23).

The Origins of Social Relations

In addition to what has been mentioned, the network of relations indispensable for the realization of the concerted social activity is not a primary effect generated by the realms which constitute a society. Rather, it is the result of the very conditions and circumstances which generate the historical movement itself.

We saw above that the said movement can be explained as being the result of a certain conflict according to Hegel's methodology, or as being the response to a specific challenge according to Toynbee's point of view.

It is a known fact that the first task a society carries out in the course of changing its status is conditional upon the completion of the network of its relations. Accordingly, one can assert that the construction of *the network of relations is the first historical task a society carries out upon its birth*. By the same token, the first task the Islamic society undertook was to draw the covenant¹ which laid down the basis for the relationships between the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*.² The *hijra* (migration) is regarded as the reference point in Islamic history not because it was a personal act done by the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, but because it happened to be the first historical task accomplished by the Islamic society. That is to say, it was the weaving of its social relations network even though its three social realms had not yet taken their distinctive shape.

In fact, history starts before the completion of these realms;

this is a manifest truth which was exhibited by the Islamic society at the very moment of its birth.

Similarly, history may sometimes come to an end even though the society is very rich and abounds with its *persons*, *ideas* and *objects*. This happened to the Islamic society at the age of decline and decadence, i.e., when it was, in the course of its evolution, struck by the coefficient of *colonizability*.³ Although the Islamic society then was so rich, yet its social relations network was torn apart.

This situation is clearly alluded to by the Prophet, peace be upon him, when he addressed the Muslims, for instruction not only for mere information, that: "The people will soon summon one another to attack you as people when eating invite others to share their dish." Someone asked: "Will that be because of our small numbers at that time?" He (the Prophet) replied: "No, you will be numerous at that time: but you will be scum and rubbish like that carried down by a torrent, and Allah will take fear of you from the breasts of your enemy and place *al-wahan* (enervation) into your hearts." Someone asked: "What is *wahan* (enervation)?" Apostle of Allah, may peace be upon him, replied: "Love of the world (*dunia*) and dislike of death."⁴

There is no doubt that our present generation would perceive the significance and relevance of this tradition more clearly than the companions of the Prophet could have done, for its meaning fully applies to the world of colonizers and of those in a state of *colonizability*—a situation each one of us has personally experienced.

Be that as it may, no one can claim that those relations are mere outcomes resulting from the mere addition of persons, ideas and objects to each other. When we deal with anyone of these realms, this implies that we are actually examining a society in the course of one of the phases of its evolution; that is to say, looking at each realm as being a consequence of such process of

evolution.

Consequently, *the 'person' as such is not simply an individual who makes up the species, but he is rather a complex being that produces civilization. This being is 'itself' a product of civilization because it is indebted to it for the ideas and objects at its disposal.*

In other words, each one of the three realms conforms to the following analytical formula:

Product of civilization = man + soil + time.

This fundamental historical and organic relationship manifests itself [first] at the level of each one of the components of the society so as to demonstrate in a specific manner its specific influence, and [second] at the level of the interconnectedness of those components thus demonstrating their entire influence as an entity. It specifically manifests itself at the personal level of the individual by endowing him in a specific manner with the essential order of his social bonds. In conclusion, the origins of the social relations network which enables a society to carry out its concerted action in history are exclusively traced back to the very unfolding of its historical organic genesis. By the same token, it is the history of this genesis which reveals the origins of the latter in the same manner as time itself determines the nature of the social relations at their very formative stage.

Translator's Notes

1. Known as the *Sahifah* or *Sahifat al Madīnah*, this covenant represents, in Islamic history, the first 'social contract' drafted by the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, to organize the relationship between the various tribal and ethnic groups that constituted the Madinese society.

2. *Ansār* (lit. supporters) is a term designating, in Islamic history, the indigenous people of Yathrib (named Madīnah by the Prophet Muhammad) who embraced Islam, while *Muhājirūn* refers to the Mekkan Muslims who emigrated to Madīnah with the Prophet.
3. *Colonizability*: a term coined by Bennabi (Fr. colonisabilité) and frequently used in his books to depict the state of internal weakness and susceptibility to colonization in the Muslim society. Accordingly, colonialism was, in Bennabi's view, an effect and not a cause, of the internal conditions of the peoples and societies which came under its yoke.
In Bennabi's view, this is a universal law that applies to every society, for *colonisabilité* always invites colonialism!
4. This *hadīth* is narrated by Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal on the authority of Thawbān under the number 287, in his *hadīth* encyclopaedia *al-Musnad* (Beirut: Dar al Fikr, no date). It is also reported by Abū Dāwood on the authority of Thawbān, No 4246, in his *hadīth* work known as *as-Sunan*.

Nature of Social Relations

Whenever we find, in a given place, at a certain time, an action that coalesces human beings, ideas and objects, this is but an indication that civilization has already started in that specific framework, and that the synthesis thereof has been effectively realized within the *realm of persons*.

In reality, the first task in the process of social change is that which would transform the human being from the state of being an individual to that of a person. This occurs by changing his primary qualities which link him to the species into social trends that would link him to the society.

It is the specific relations within the *realm of persons* which provide the necessary bonds between the ideas and objects in the course of the concerted activity undertaken by a society.

Likewise, gathering of individuals in a certain situation or at a certain place is a sensible manifestation of those relations in one field of social activity or another. All forms of such gathering, be it a demonstration, a school, an army, a factory, a trade union or a cinema, are only different expressions of the same relations network.

The type of gathering which coincides with the first task a society carries out at the very moment of its birth is a strong and genuine expression of its relations network.

In the Muslim society, nothing is more expressive of this

reality than the gathering of Muslims in the mosque for the Friday congregational prayer. Thus, it reflects in its content the most sublime values which recurrently remind the society of its birth. Indeed, it is both its symbol and memory.

This memorial and symbolic value assumed by specific gatherings of persons is a universal phenomenon which exists in all societies moulded according to a certain belief-system. In the Christian society, it is manifested in the Sunday mass which reminds the Christians of the age of the early Roman Caves.¹ It also exists in the Soviet Union where, every year in the Red Square, people are reminded by means of their military-like march and national hymns of the early labour gatherings, prior to the 17th October, 1917.

Nevertheless, all the relations that link the persons to one another are cultural in nature, that is to say, they depend upon the fundamentals of a given culture as we have demonstrated in a previous study stating that: *culture is the climate which moulds the personality of the individual and that it is a set of ethical and aesthetic values and norms.*²

In light of the above, if we examine, for example, a specific colour as being the characteristic feature of a given social environment, it will be revealed, from that very perspective, that it points to a definite aesthetic norm on the basis of which people choose the colours of their clothes such that "their appearance would please the others" or, at least, they would not be shunned by them. Accordingly, it is clear that speaking about a "local colour" is far from being non-sensical or superfluous, since such a colour marks in a special manner the environment of a society.

If we take, for instance, the picture of a crowd of people, say one hundred thousand persons, it would mostly reflect the particular colour which prevails in the environment of the respective area. Had it been the picture of a location on the Washington-Moscow axis, it would be a dark picture because

black is the prevalent colour peculiar to the cultural climate of that axis. In contrast, if it is taken from a locality on the Tangier-Jakarta axis, it would certainly be a bright picture, for white is the prevalent colour in the cultural environment of this axis.³

In both cases, the picture would only have reflected an aesthetic order peculiar to each environment.

Similarly, the economic relationship would also manifest itself in an environment where, consequent upon the completion of the historical organic synthesis of *Man*, *Soil* and *Time*, the division of labour has already taken place.

Thus, we can state, as a general rule, that whatever relationship of whatever kind, either within each one of the *realms of persons, ideas and objects* or between them, represents in fact a relationship conditioned by a specific culture. Consequently, all forms of intellectual communication such as art and language are all the more so a social relationship.

It is worth noting here that by linking the social relations network entirely to the economic structure, the Marxian thought considers the economic relations to be the basis upon which the common activity of a society depends. Of course, the discussion of Marxism in this respect must be conducted according to the approach we have developed in our book entitled *The Problem of Culture*.⁴

Yet, there is a common point between the Marxian analysis and ours: as far as the concept of culture is concerned, we demonstrated that the Marxian doctrine is not wrong but it is insufficient. This is because it cannot, in our view, enable us to construct the cultural model which will meet the requirements of our own situation.

The Marxian definition does not provide us with any explanatory power except within the literal confines of the doctrine itself. Consequently, it remains, as far as we are

concerned, unintelligible and non-applicable. Yet, it might be, for the Marxist, fully understandable and applicable—as his daily experience may testify to this fact, insofar as he finds within himself the psychological elements which would "bestow life" on the definition and endow it with efficacy in the course of its implementation in the Marxist context.

However, this is only a particular aspect with regard to a universal issue. Likewise, it reveals the difference between the *expressed ideas* and the *impressed ideas*: the first category of ideas bears a personal aspect which makes it attributable to its author, for it is his brainchild and his specific way of viewing things; while the second category bears a non-personal character for it originates from a universal philosophy peculiar to the entire social context. We can define such a philosophy as being the general frame of thought of that context or, to use Walter Schubart's words,⁵ "*its bestowed spirit which belongs to the realm of eternity.*"

Although it is the Marxian spirit that would make the respective doctrine both understandable and amenable to implementation in the context of a Marxist society, this spirit is never revealed in the [philosophical] proofs and postulates of Marxism.

Thus, if a Marxist claims that it is possible to change a society by changing its economic conditions, this claim might have its full significance in his mind as well as its validity in his daily experience. Nevertheless, it would be, as far as we are concerned, an empty expression having no meaning to either our personal or social experience.

Furthermore, looking at the impact of a major economic factor like oil on the development of some Arab countries for the last two and half decades, I find myself compelled, in the light of so many experiences, to reject Marxism: not only has oil been unable to uplift the social standard in these countries, but it has

rather degraded it, including the moral values. This has been such that, in a country relying completely on oil such as Saudi Arabia where a reformist idea, *Wahhabism*, echoed thirty years ago giving hope to our generation which saw in it a kind of yeast for the Arabo-Islamic renaissance, oil has had only one result: burning the reformist idea of the *Wahhabi* movement.⁶

Had one maintained that the retrogressive as well as the progressive movements have one and the same meaning in the Marxian point of view, then we should assert that the evolution of a society is not dependent upon the economic factors alone.

Nevertheless, we would like to readily admit that the Marxian argument might be valid in view of the fact that Marxism has shown its efficacy in the real practical life; it has been, at this level, consolidated by the '*spirit*' which moves the persons, ideas and objects—the forces deemed to carry out the concerted action in Communist countries, as well as elsewhere.

There is no doubt that it is the 'Marxist spirit' that has woven the inter-personal links which stimulate the individual to contribute in such activity.

If it happens at a certain point of time that the efficacy of the common activity—that which makes history—has increased or decreased, the historian would be in a position to explain this social phenomenon in various ways. He would, for example, attribute it to a change in the economic conditions if he views things from a Marxian perspective. He would also be able to relate it to a change in the cultural circumstances in general if he looks at it from an attenuated materialistic perspective.

These are two different views standing in contrast to one another. Each one of them reveals only a specific aspect of the phenomenon. As a result, they do not reveal the fundamental change occurring at the level of the '*spirit*' with regard to which any other change is but an epiphenomenon or a mere symptom.

Accordingly, we give preponderance to tracing the above

phenomenon back to a change in the *social relations network*. This enables us to deal with social change at the level of its roots, and thus we can state that the *social relations network* has changed for it is at the roots that the primary effect of the '*spirit*' of a society manifests itself.

Indeed, nature provides us with a highly significant example in this respect. The biological changes which occur within living beings, thus preserving life by supplying it with organic ingredients in the form of quantities of materials, do not in reality alter the nature of these materials through the biological operations. Hydrogen and carbon, for instance, do not lose their nature and characteristics in the course of the body's assimilation of food ingredients. This means that it is not the elements—i.e., matter—that undergo a process of change in the course of assimilation; rather, it is the relationship between these elements that alone undergoes change.⁷

Animal and vegetative life is also governed by the same law. Thus, we can see in the biological organisms, the most outstanding work of nature, how energy is transformed into matter through the living being conformably with the natural order as expounded by Einstein's theory.⁸

Evidently, this is true and valid in social life as well. It is so erroneous to attribute the changes that take place at this level primordially to the 'social matter', economy, as well as all that relates to physical labour. Rather, they must be attributed to the *network of relations* which, altering the conditions that precede the existence of the economic phenomenon itself, unify its components to create an organized human life that would perform some social functions within the framework of a "concerted action" which makes history.

Translator's Notes

1. Catacombs (or Roman Caves): Subterranean Jewish or early Christian cemeteries found in certain parts of the Roman World, notably Rome itself, where soft rocks made the tunnelling of passages and carving of burial niches easy. The practice is believed to have been derived from ancient Jewish cave burials.
2. See the author's *Mushkilat ath-Thaqāfah (The Problem of Culture)*, especially the following sections: the Psycho-social Aspects of Culture (p. 43-57), A psychological synthesis of Culture (61-74) and Ethical and Moral Orientation, (79-89), Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1987, 4th reprint.
3. As early as the mid 1950s, Bennabi developed the concept of civilizational axis on the basis of which he maintained that the countries of the globe belonged, broadly speaking, to two major civilizational areas or blocs. While the Washington-Moscow axis represents the bloc of developed and industrialized countries, the Tangier-Jakarta axis (Tangier and Jakarta being two cities in Morocco and Indonesia respectively) represents that of the under-developed and non-industrialized countries. This categorization of Bennabi's is quite equivalent to that of the North-South parallelism. Interestingly, however, Bennabi based his categorization not simply on mere economic and technological or geographical considerations, but rather on deep cultural and even religious affinities. Accordingly, he saw that countries like Australia and New Zealand, though geographically belonging to the southern hemisphere of the globe, rather belong to the northern hemisphere civilizationaly.
4. See in the author's *Mushkilat ath-Thaqāfah*, (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 4th edn., 1987 reprint), chap. 'Culture and Sociology', pp. 27-57.
5. Schubbart, Walter, Baltic citizen of German origin. A 20th century philosopher who developed a theory on civilization interpreting it as being the incarnation of the genius of a certain historical age thus bearing a "universal spirit" or "Eon" that determines the characteristic features of a civilization. He thus stood in opposition to Spengler's theory based on a racial interpretation of human civilization and culture. His theory was outlined in his book *Europe and the Spirit of the East*.
The information about this scholar has been gathered from various references to him made by Bennabi himself. See for example, Malik Bennabi: *Shurūt an-Nahda*, (Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 1984); (Cairo 1959).
6. The author is referring here to the *Wahhābi* movement which was revived in the mid-twenties (1926) under the name of *al-Ikhwān* (Brotherhood) as a movement of *Islāh* and revivalism. It is interesting to note here that Bennabi, attracted by, and sympathizing with, this movement in its new phase, was planning to go, after graduating as an electrical engineer, to Saudi Arabia to put his skill and knowledge at the service of an independent Muslim country. To this end, he arranged everything to go with his French wife, Khadija, but they finally could not get the visas from certain Arab embassies in Paris! See Bennabi's *Mudhakkirātu Shāhidin lil'Qarn*

(*Memoirs of a Witness of the Century*), Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 1984, pp. 323 and 350-352.

Bennabi's insightful observations as to the corrupting and perverting effect of wealth and opulence and its far-reaching ethical and socio-cultural implications for human life are clearly inspired by the Qur'anic teachings, cf. Qur'an, 11:16; 17:16; 21:13; 23:33 and 64; 34:34 and 43:23.

See also Muhammad Asad's explanation and comments with regard to the Qur'anic terms: *taraf* and *mutraf*, pp.334 (note 147), 420 (note 22) and 662 (notes 46 and 47). (*The Message of the Qur'an*, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980).

This theme was central in Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* which he discussed in terms of the rise, development and decline of human society seen according to his typology of Bedouin and sedentary human groups in connection with the concept of '*asabiyyah*' (tribal cohesion). See Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal and abridged by N.J. Dawood (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) pp.91-4 and 138-42.

7. Obviously, Bennabi's contention here can be valid provided we understand his notion of matter as referring to the primary atomic and sub-atomic structure of material bodies and organisms.
8. Einstein, Albert (1879-1955): German-Swiss-American mathematical physicist, who ranks with Galilei and Newton as one of the great conceptual revisers of man's understanding of the universe. Born in Ulm, Bavaria, of Jewish parents, he was educated at Munich, Aarau and Zurich. At the Swiss Patent Office (1902-05), he began to publish original papers on the theoretical aspects of problems in physics. He achieved world fame by his special and general theories of relativity, and won the 1921 Nobel prize for physics for his work. The special theory provided a new system of mechanics which accommodated James Clerk Maxwell's electromagnetic field theory as well as the hitherto inexplicable results of Michelson-Marley experiments on the speed of light. After Hitler's rise to power he left Germany, and from 1934 lectured at Princeton, USA, becoming an American citizen and professor at Princeton in 1940.

He spent the rest of his life trying, by means of his unified theory (1950), to establish a merger between quantum theory and his general theory of relativity. His works include *About Zionism* (1930) and *Why War?* (1933, with Sigmund Freud).

Social Wealth

The wealth of a society can never be measured by the quantity of "objects" it possesses. Rather, it should be measured in terms of the "ideas" at its disposal.

It might happen that hard and adverse circumstances befall a society, such as a flood or war, which may destroy completely its *realm of objects*, or make it lose control over it.

The disaster would be more devastating had such a society at the same time lost control over its *realm of ideas*. However, if it succeeds to save its ideas, it would actually have saved everything for it would be able to reconstruct its *realm of things*.

During the second world war, Germany underwent such severe circumstances, and so did Russia to a lesser extent. Both countries, especially Germany, witnessed the war destroying their realm of objects in such a manner that almost nothing was left intact. Yet, they could reconstruct everything, thanks to their stock of ideas.

This task of reconstruction is itself a concerted action that a society duly undertakes. We have seen that the realization of such an achievement is impossible in the absence of a network of social relations that would regulate and channel it towards specific ends. It follows that wealth in terms of ideas alone is not sufficient, as the history of the Muslim society has shown in two different instances.

While this society was beginning its ascendancy in history in the 7th century AD, its *realm of ideas* was still embryonic and

vague in comparison with the then civilized societies in Egypt, Persia and the *Sham* (i.e. Syria, Palestine and Lebanon) which it invaded and vanquished.

If we examine it six centuries later when it started crumbling down the abyss of decline and decadence, we will find that it had at its disposal the richest libraries of the world at that time. Yet, it catastrophically collapsed under the blows of such new nations like the Spanish whose *realm of ideas* was relatively poor. Thus we see that libraries do not help avoid defeat.

The efficacy of ideas therefore depends upon the network of relations, i.e., we cannot think of a harmonious action incorporating the persons, ideas and objects without these indispensable relations. Such an action is efficacious and effective inasmuch as the network of relations approaches firmness and compactness.

Accordingly, if the wealth of a society is to be measured by the amount of its ideas on the one hand, it must also be seen in terms of its network of relations on the other. The ideal level of social evolution that a society can reach is subject to the status in which such a society realizes the best psycho-temporal conditions for carrying out its concerted action.

Generally speaking, this occurs when a society is in its formative stage such as the Islamic society in the Madinese period and the Christian society during the Caves-of-Rome period; the reason being that in this stage a society reaches its utmost level of integration and harmony in which moral strength and transparency reach their highest levels.

Conversely, a society approaches its fatal end-point when it gradually loses the quality of coherence such that its individuals disintegrate into aimless atoms. At the end of its degeneration, it becomes entirely unable to perform its common activity. It then ceases to be a *society* in the specific meaning of

the term as used in our investigation.

It is therefore quite natural to find that the functional components of a society change within those limits, heading towards the same direction. This process of change and evolution can be expressed in two different ways:

- a. Quantitatively, by means of an equation that represents the number of relationships involved in the social relations network, and
- b. Qualitatively, through an equation that represents the psycho-temporal level or, to put it differently, the efficacy of this network.

The basis of the quantitative representation depends on the number of relations which link every individual to the other members of the community at a definite moment of its evolution.

Assuming that the total number of the individuals of the community is N , then each and every individual will be involved in a total number of relations equal to K as follows: $K = N - X$.

Thus, the total number N of the individuals who constitute the social network as a whole, including the total number of relations, is L as follows: $L = NK = N(N-X)$.

The number X represents, as will be seen, the index of development and evolution from the quantitative point of view. Its value lies by necessity between the two limits of social evolution we pointed out earlier. It also stands as an indication of that evolution. Therefore, it necessarily oscillates between 1 and N or, to put it in an algebraic formula: $1 < X < N$.

Accordingly, when a society reaches the peak of its development, its social network would be: $L_1 = N(N - 1)$, which is the utmost limit. This status can be implied from a *hadīth* by the Prophet, peace be upon him, stating that: "*A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce*

each other."¹ This *ḥadīth* translates the state of the early Islamic society when it realized in Madīnah the model of a coherent and classless society in which every individual was actually attached to all the members of the society by means of intimate personal relations.

In contrast, when a society reaches its ultimate disintegration, its social network takes the form of the following equation: $L_2 = N(N - N) = 0$. This means that the social network is dissolved in such a way that it is unable to meet the requirements of any common activity which ultimately becomes impossible.

In fact, this transformation from the [original] ideal to the final [degenerate] state occurs in the form of an internal breakdown, followed by various types of disruption in the social fabric or by fractures and lacunas in its harmony and compatibility.

As a matter of fact, the number **X**, indicating the amount of those lacunas and disruptions, points in a specific manner to the *social vacuum* which corresponds to the degree of scantiness and paucity in the entire social network. Furthermore, this evolution can be expressed otherwise from a qualitative perspective by means of a diagram that translates the cycle of evolution which every civilization undergoes.²

The three phases of this cycle correspond to three stages which a society undergoes in the process of its evolution:

1. The ideal and original stage in which all the human qualities and talents are under the dominion of the *soul*, being thus guided by considerations which are of a metaphysical and spiritual nature.
2. The second stage where all qualities and talents of the individuals are particularly under the control of *reason* and the *intellect*, and are thus oriented towards tackling the

practical problems of life.

3. The third and final stage represents the degeneration and disintegration of those qualities and talents when they become, under the sway of the *instinct*, freed from the tutorship of both the *soul* and *reason*. At this stage, no common activity is by any means possible, for it is chaos and anarchy which actually prevail. Such was the state of Muslim society during the era of the petty kings³ [of Andalusia].

Moreover, we can demonstrate the different stages of social evolution and development by expressing them in terms of a cultural scheme which we elaborated in our book *The Problem of Culture*.

In fact, we can regard each one of the stages of social evolution in light of the dominance of a specific cultural factor. Likewise, it is evident that the culture of a society in its formative stage is ethical in essence. In contrast, when a society approaches the moment of its demise, we find that it becomes immersed in an aesthetic tendency which gradually shifts away from the fundamentals of genuine beauty.

On the other hand, it must be pointed out that the societies of our age would achieve their state of harmony and integrality only as they succeed to create a formal, non-personal relations network moving towards as much perfection and extension as possible. In this regard, social security institutions in developed countries are but a concrete embodiment of that network.

It is thus evident that the most successful state on the path of genuine human progress would be the one realizing a social relations network as close as possible to that which was woven by Islam during the Madinese era.

Translator's Notes

1. See Translator's Note 7 to Chapter I.
2. This diagram is provided in chap. 10, [p. 63] of this study. [*Author's note*]
3. Petty or Partisan kings (*Mulūk at-Tawā'if*): this refers to the later period of the history of Muslim Spain (Andalus) when the Muslims were divided in smaller and tiny 'states and dynasties' at the head of which were self-interested and narrow-minded monarchs who hardly cared about the fate of the Muslim community there, and who were plotting against each other even through seeking non-Muslims' support and assistance.

This led to the expatriation of most of the Muslims from Spain and the subjugation of those amongst them who remained to inquisition by the Roman Catholic Church

Social Pathology

It has always been the case that when a society developed, its development, regardless of its pattern, was recorded, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in its *social relations network*.

When the strain of the network's texture loosens up in such a manner that it is no longer capable of holding up the collective activity effectively, this is but a manifest indication that the society is in a pathological state and that it is on the way to its fatal end.

If the network is entirely undone, this would virtually be an announcement of the death of that society. Then nothing remains of such a society except memories buried in historical archives.

This fatal end may occur even though the society enjoys plenitude in persons, ideas and objects such as was the case with the Muslim society in the *Mashriq* (East) at the end of the Abbasid era as well as in the *Maghrib* (West) at the end of the *Muwahhid* era.¹

This state of disintegration and disruption which befell the Muslim society when it became unable to undertake any collective action might well be what was alluded to by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in a famous tradition:

"The people will soon summon one another to attack you as people when eating invite others to share their dish." Someone asked: "Will that be because of our small numbers at that time?" He (the Prophet) replied: "No, you will be numerous at the time, but you will be scum and

rubbish like that carried down by a torrent, and Allah will take away fear of you from the breasts of your enemy and place *al-wahan* (enervation) into your hearts." Someone asked: "What is *al-wahan* (enervation)? Apostle of Allah." He replied: "Love of the world (*dunia*) and dislike of death."

However, this is not something specific to the Muslim society. When the strong Assyrian empire, for example, disappeared in the 5th century BC, this historical event should by no means be attributed to a mere incident of war, but it should in fact be linked to the degeneration and disintegration of the society which was supporting the empire. This society suddenly became impotent and was unable to carry out any collective activity. Its broken relations network could no longer allow it to defend and support the strong empire of Ashurbanipal.²

Before a society is entirely disintegrated, diseases creep into the social body in the form of breaks and ruptures in its relations network due to both the quantitative and qualitative reasons discussed above. This pathological situation may last for a long or short time before reaching its ultimate disintegration. Such is the way the slow process of degeneration creeps into the social body.

All the causes of disintegration exclusively lie, however, in the network of social relations. Thus, a society might appear well-off and growing although its relations network is suffering from many diseases. These social ailments which manifest themselves at the level of the inter-personal relationships are most significantly manifested in a feeling of conceit and self-gratification which befalls the *self* and subsequently leads to social disintegration in favour of sheer individualism. As a result, the person disappears or, more specifically, the *individual* gains back independence and power in the body of the society.

Likewise, social relations become corrupt once conceit and

self-gratification submerge the *selves* in such a manner that any collective action becomes difficult, indeed impossible because disputes and controversies amongst individuals would then be conducted not to find solutions for the real problems of life, but only to produce proofs and arguments [for one's adopted stand and views].

In a sane human society, dealing with a problem is usually meant to solve it, whereas under the pathological state it is only an occasion for conceit and self-gratification of the ego. Problems, then, will never be solved, not because of paucity of ideas or objects, but because the network of relations has ceased functioning properly.

At this stage, no one would care to tackle the real problems as the great *imāms* (leading scholars) of Islamic jurisprudence used to do. Emphasis would instead be placed on mere fictional problems; such was the attitude of the jurists of *the age of decline and decadence* who were no longer concerned with the real problems that arose in the course of the Muslim society's evolution. They were rather concerned with *pure fictional* cases such as the sex of the angels or ablution because of sexual intercourse with an animal!

Hence, we can easily imagine what could have happened, in a sick society like this, if a Caliph like 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb had decided to dismiss a man of the calibre of Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd from the leadership of the Islamic army in the Shām! Such an attempt would have been sufficient to shatter the Muslim ummah if it only had taken place two or three centuries later. Yet, because the Islamic *ego* in the early days of Islam was normal and sane, both the action of 'Umar and the response of Khālīd were therefore free from any complexes—their relationship was normal and sound.

The moment psychological complexes float on the surface of the *self* in a society, its concerted action becomes difficult,

indeed impossible. Then one can rightly label such a situation as being a *socio-drame* (social tragedy) in line with Morineau's analysis.³ It is a social tragedy measured at ' $N(N-X)$ ' index of social relations.

Accordingly, if we examine all the ailments of a society in its different fields of economics, politics, technology etc., we are in fact examining the diseases of the *ego* in that society as they are manifested in the state of inefficacy of its social relations network.

Were we to forget or ignore this psychological dimension, our judgements would be caught up in mere appearances and superficialities, and they would never encompass the essence of things.

In this light, one can evaluate the attempts by the leaders of some Afro-Asian countries to implement, in the economic field, the solutions suggested by some European experts. This takes place despite the fact that those solutions are of no use in the countries concerned because they do not accord with the structure of the *self* in those countries as I tried to show in my book *L'Afro-Asiatisme*.⁴

Therefore, any technical and economic solutions [that we might borrow] must be adapted to both the psychological conditions and the stage of evolution of the country in which they are to be implemented. The *self* has also to be adapted to the solutions meant for application.

Thus, we have to deal with social problems from two perspectives: pathological and curative. These two aspects should not, by any means, be separated from one another if we genuinely seek to heal a society suffering from any kind of disturbance and abnormality in its social relations network. Such a pathological state deserves utmost concern and attention, since any corrupt relationship between the individuals will necessarily

generate complexes that frustrate their concerted action by making it so difficult, indeed impossible.

Every corrupt relationship in *the realm of persons* has a direct impact on both the *realm of ideas* and the *realm of objects*. Hence, any social degeneration in the realm of persons will certainly expand to the ideas and objects in the form of paucity and scantiness. In this respect, although new ideas such as that of the circulation of blood⁵ saw the light of day in the Muslim society in the 14th century A.D., yet they remained absent from its *realm of ideas* because its social relations network had already been dissolved.

Similarly, a number of small devices which constituted an integral part of the realm of objects met with no better fate. One such object, the *jawwāl*,⁶ which was well-known in Baghdad during the 8th century A.D., totally disappeared from the Abbasid capital only two centuries later.

This was but an indication of the state of *paucity* in the *realm of objects* which was spreading in the Muslim society at that time.

It is quite natural that the effects of such paucity would stretch out thus affecting the cost of living as is manifest in the price list of that time which provides us with significant indications about Muslim daily life in the Middle ages. This price list is quoted by Prof. Ali Mazāhīrī from a valuable book compiled by Mr. Henry Sauvier on this subject. It will suffice to cite here the figures pertaining to the price index of one kilogram of bread in the markets of Baghdad which Mr. Sauvier has converted into gold francs:

Year (AD)	Quantity of Bread (kg)	Price (in French old Franc)
813	1	0.10
945	1	0.31
992	1	7.59
1152	1	7.50

As can be clearly seen, the price of bread had increased by 7500 percent in a period of three centuries. If one attempts to interpret this phenomenon in light of the law of supply and demand, it would only mean that there had been a shortage in the foodstuff in the markets of Baghdad. This kind of shortage is a problem which exclusively concerns the process of production. This again means that it is fundamentally associated with land and distribution. However, we only too well know that the natural characteristics of the areas extending between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers did not change for a very long time. *Therefore, if any decrease did occur in production, it must have been the effect of factors pertaining to the nature of the organization of agricultural activities as well as to the distribution process; that is, a disturbance in the social relations network.*

It is also quite natural, as stated earlier, that any social breakdown affects *the realm of ideas*. This is just what we have particularly observed with respect to the work of Ibn Khaldūn which had remained a kind of dead words in the Muslim society until the late 19th century.⁷

More importantly however, it should be stressed that, were the price list of bread, for instance, to reveal to us the line of decline and decadence during that period stretching over three centuries, a set of immoral values which were spreading in the

same period would all the more so reveal to us the degree of that general decadence! Thus, the two aspects explain one another; the 'art' of deceiving customers can be traced back to that remote period, for it is a fact that the 13th century AD had witnessed the early attempts of artificial or imitated goods before Germany knew them six centuries later for different purposes.

In fact, if Germany resorted to the 'art' of imitated or artificial goods as a substitute for the raw commodities which it could not afford in war-time, the Abbasid era had known this 'art' solely to deceive the customers in such a way that goods like artificial sugar and artificial meat became familiar commodities in the markets. Not only this, special books were compiled to unveil the secrets of the chemical compositions of such goods to the 'amateurs' of that art!

Translator's Notes

1. It is illuminating here to recall Ibn Khaldūn's reflections on the historical destiny of the Islamic civilization at the stage to which Bennabi is referring. As the author of the *Muqaddimah* dramatically put it:

".... This was the situation until, in the middle of the eighth (fourteenth) century, civilization both in the East and the West was visited by a destructive plague which devastated nations and caused populations to vanish. It swallowed up many of the good things of civilization and wiped them out. It overtook the dynasties at the time of their senility, when they had reached the limit of their duration. It lessened their power and curtailed their influence. It weakened their authority. Their situation approached the point of annihilation and dissolution. Civilization decreased with the decrease of mankind.... The East (*Mashriq*), it seems, was similarly visited, though in accordance with and in proportion to [the East's more affluent] civilization. It was as if the voice of existence in the world had called for oblivion and restriction, and the world responded to its call. God inherits the earth and whomever is upon it". Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rozenthal (Princeton University Press, 1967), vol. I, p.64.

2. Ashurbanipal (Greek form: Sardanapalus) (669-640BC). King of Assyria, eldest son of Esarhaddon and grandson of Sennacherib, with all the ambition but without the genius of his father. He was a generous patron of art and letters, and his reign marks the zenith of Assyrian splendour. He extended his sway from Elam (the name given

in antiquity to what is now SW Iran) to Egypt, but the revolt of Babylon shook the empire.

3. Morineau, American psychologist, is founder of a psychological school which maintains that the psychological complexes reside at the level of the inter-individual relations differently from the Freudian school which argues that they lie within the individuals themselves. (The information about this scholar was gathered from Bennabi's remarks about him.)
4. Bennabi's book *L'Afro-Asiatisme: Conclusions sur la Conférence de Bandoeng*, first published in Cairo in 1957, was an attempt to capture the historical and cultural significance of the Bandoeng conference which was held in Indonesia, 1955, by Muslim and Third World political leaders and paved the ground for the non-Alignment Movement.
5. In the 7th century of the Islamic calendar (13th century AD), the renowned Muslim physician 'Ala' ad Din ibn an-Nafis came up with his theory of the *lesser* or *pulmonary* circulation of the blood, from the right ventricle to the heart to the pulmonary artery (vena areriosa) to the lung and from there through the pulmonary vein (arteria venosa) to the left ventricle of the heart. By this theory/discovery, he boldly contradicted the accepted ideas of Galen and Ibn Sīna and anticipated part of William Harvey's fundamental discovery.
More than two centuries later, the English physician William Harvey (1578-1658) made his discovery of the lesser as well as greater circulation of the blood and gave a full account of it in the human body.
6. The *jawwāl* was a small metallic bag provided with a small chain in which one puts a tiny amount of coal, wood and an engreased piece of cloth. Stirring it by a quick movement would generate fire. [Author's note]
7. For a more elaborate discussion of what may be called a Bennabian sociology of ideas, see Malik Bennabi. *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, trans. Mohamed T. El-Mesawi (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Budaya 'Ilmu, 1994), see also Mohamed T. El-Mesawi: *A Muslim Theory of Human Society* (forthcoming).

Society and Moral Values

The considerations we have just expounded can be summed up in two major points already emphasized throughout the previous discussion:

1. A society can never carry out its concerted action without the existence of a relations network that would constitute the basis for the synthesization of its various psycho-temporal elements.
2. Every social relationship is in essence a cultural value embodied in both the ethical norms and the aesthetic order peculiar to that society.

Thus, it is only natural that we consider moral values an essential factor in the course of the concerted action carried out thanks to the existence of the social relations network.

In this connection, we are confronted with an ontological question, namely: whether a society creates spontaneously the ethical values which guide it towards its objectives.

In order to answer this question, let the *jāhili* Arab society be the field of our investigation and let us take, for our investigation, the custom of burying girls alive. This is a *case* indicative of a moral value which had its impact as a force of social change in the *jāhili* society at a time when it was being prepared to start its ascendancy on the historical scene.

We have, in addition to this, a direct testimony as to the factors which were of major influence in this respect. Taken as a historical source, the glorious Qur'an bears irrefutable

testimony to the causes of burying baby girls alive. It addressed the Arabs of the *jāhiliyyah*¹ in two contexts with regard to this problem as follows:

1. "... and do not kill your children for fear of poverty, (for) it is We who shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them..." (Qur'an, 3:151).
2. "Hence, do not kill your children for fear of poverty: it is We who shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily killing them is a great sin." (Qur'an, 17:31).

If we examine these two Qur'anic verses from the historical perspective of that age, we will discern that they do not leave any doubt, whatsoever, as regards the reasons behind the burial of alive girlchildren² the economic conditions of the *jāhilī* era were of major influence in the existence of such a cruel custom, if not the sole factor therein. However, these texts point at the same time to a moral value which had already penetrated the fabric of social life and transformed it, not through the economic realities which had not undergone any change, but by directly affecting the realm of the soul. We, therefore, have a significant instance which would enable us to investigate the problem of moral values exemplified in a real situation.

Let us now examine the two verses in their entirety as a legislation of a specific law in the same way as modern legislative bodies enact their laws.

It is quite a universal fashion in our time to explain a law as merely being a social reality, that is to say, a law is a creation of the concrete realities of society alone!

But would this apply automatically to the case under consideration here?

This would require us to study the above verses which establish the law prohibiting the *burial of girlchildren* as an

outcome of the economic circumstances which were prevailing in the *jāhili* Arab society if we are to follow the logic of our age in explaining things.

However, it should be noticed that such an explanation would immediately lead us into an obvious contradiction for it is illogical to accept a social fact and reject it on the same ground.

If someone argued that the 'burying alive of girlchildren' in the *jāhili* Arabia came into existence as a result of economic conditions peculiar to that society as is testified by the sources of that time, amongst which the Qur'an stands in prominence, it would, however, be difficult to attribute the abolition thereof to the same economic conditions which had not really changed.

Furthermore, since the verses under consideration here are, in the historical perspective, an abolition of the *burial*, we will fall in a flagrant paradox if we account for the prohibition *law* of *burial* in mere economic terms.

It might be tempting to explain the law in question in psychological terms by attributing it to factors associated with the moral change which preceded or coincided with the revelation of the Qur'an within the context of the *jāhili* environment. Nevertheless, such an explanation will not be acceptable because the contemporaries of the advent of the mentioned law of prohibition were themselves practising that painful custom. Suffice it here to mention that a man such as 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb was one of those contemporaries. Likewise, the immediate psychological explanation cannot hold, indeed it is almost as irrelevant as the economic interpretation.

In effect, the custom of burying girlchildren alive was strongly established and deeply rooted in the mentality of that age. This mentality itself had not yet undergone any change when the law of prohibition was revealed. Interestingly, the author of *al-Aghānī*, Abū'l Faraj al-Isfahānī,³ relates a story attributed to the grandfather of the great Arab poet al Farazdaq⁴ who was

named the 'revivifier' of the 'buried alive girlchildren' because of his good deeds in this respect.⁵

This story indirectly supports our thesis. Actually, it states that when the grandfather of the Uamayyad poet first saved a victim from death by paying a ransom to her parents, he justified his act by saying: "This is a noble deed, no one has preceded me to it."

If we look at the historical significance of this statement, we would easily realize that nothing had changed at the level of the *jāhili* environment and mentality in regard to the question of burying alive female children when its prohibition was revealed.

Accordingly, the moral value which this law represents can by no means be a product of the *jāhili* society.

Moreover, in order to generalize this conclusion, we must raise another question:

Can a society create its moral values?

Here again, the *jāhili* society can provide us with an example which will help us formulate our answer even if it does not give us the answer to the problem in its universal dimension.

As a matter of fact, this society saw that the course and style of its life had suddenly started changing under the influence of some moral values whose birth took place within its sight. In addition, this society allows us to draw a comparison between this period of transformation and its precedent history which in fact extends over more than two millenia, from the time of Ismā'īl (Ishmael), the great ancestor [of the Arabs], down to the age of Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them.

This long history had indeed produced a very rich folklore and bequeathed a literary legacy unmatched by any other nation's arts and letters. Yet, this is all that the historical balance-sheet of the *jāhili* Arab society consisted of during that long span of time.

In sociological terms, we would say that this was all that

the *jāhili* society had produced as a result of a common activity which was centered on the notions of *need* and *utility*.⁶

Likewise, we first notice that this society as a whole was not productive so long as its activity was polarized in that manner, i.e., so long as it was exclusively subject to the daily and ordinary dictates and trends of life.

On the contrary, we find that it suddenly rose up and produced a marvelous civilization when its action became centered on a set of moral values whose birth took place within its very framework but the secret of whose *conception* can by no means be explained by referring to the economic and psychological conditions which were prevailing therein, as we have clearly seen in the custom of burying alive of girlchildren.

All the foregoing considerations do not, however, provide us with a comprehensive and adequate answer to the question we have raised. They only supply strong circumstantial evidences that can be consolidated by further considerations.

However, it is obvious that, should the affairs of mankind flow according to the *need* and *utility* of the species only, the mere intercourse between man and woman as was the case in the *jāhili* era, would greatly be in accordance with the biological rules to which the species is subject —taking account of the fact that the number of individuals will definitely increase due to the effect of what is called 'intercourse within the framework of sexual freedom'.

Yet, we only too well know that in every contemporary society, including those societies labeled as 'modern,' the union between the two sexes does not take place except on the basis of a specific moral value, i.e., marriage. Marriage blesses their union by means of announcing it according to a symbolic and religious ceremony. By such an announcement, the union of man and woman acquires all its social meaning as being a contract which complies not merely with the needs of the species, but also with the needs of the society.⁷

This in general is the natural course of things with regard to human society whose organization runs according to certain norms and regulations which are moral values in essence. Being not created by society itself, these values rather regulate its activities in the direction of its objectives.

Assuredly, whenever there is a transgression of the moral rules and norms in a given society, a disruption occurs in the social relations network which enables it to make its history.

Nay! the authors of such transgressions, those who advocate, for example, moral freedom in the name of progress, are in their inner depths no more than children stimulated by their sensual instincts. They, however, do not doubt for one single instant the disasters they might cause for the society. Yet, they play with their instincts as children would play with matches while they are certain that the conflagration they might cause will devour the whole city!

Translator's Notes

1. *Jāhiliyyah* is the nomenclature given by the Qur'an to the pre-Islamic era denoting ignorance, straying from God's path and moral decadence. As such, *jāhiliyyah*, according to Muslim thinkers, is not indicative of a past historical period gone forever, but of a socio-cultural and civilizational status that can happen again and again in human experience.
2. *al-Maw'ūdah* or buried-alive girlchild: history tells us that "the barbaric custom of burying female infants alive had been fairly widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia, although not to the extent as has been assumed. The motives were twofold: the fear that an increase of female offspring would result in economic burdens, as well as the fear of the humiliation frequently caused by girls being captured by a hostile tribe and subsequently preferring their captors to their fathers and brothers. Before Islam, one of the foremost opponents of this custom was Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl, a cousin of 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb... ; he died shortly before Muḥammad's call to prophethood. Another man, Sa'sa'a ibn Nājiyah al-Tamīmī (grand-father of the poet al-Farazdaq) achieved equal fame as a saviour of infants thus condemned to death; he later embraced Islam," (Muhammad Asad: *The Message of the Qur'an*, Dar al-Andalous, Gibraltar, 1984, p.933).

Testifying to the innocence of such victims, the glorious Qur'an says: "... and when the girl-child that was buried alive is made to ask, for what crime she had been slain..." (Surah 81, Verses 8 and 9).

3. Abū'l Faraj al-Isfahānī (284-356H), a littérateur and historian. His famous encyclopaedic work *Kitāb al-Aghānī* is a historical source on the Arabs before and after the advent of Islam. Ibn Khaldūn thus spoke of this work:

"Such a great (scholar) as Judge Abū'l Faraj al-Isfahānī wrote a book on songs, the *kitāb al-Aghānī*. In it he dealt with the whole of the history, poetry, genealogy, battle days and ruling dynasties of the Arabs.... His work is the most complete and comprehensive one there is. Indeed, it constitutes an archive of the Arabs. It is a collection of the *disjecta membra* of all the good things of Arab poetry, history, song, and all the other conditions (of the Arabs). There exists no book comparable to it, as far as we know. It is the ultimate goal to which a littérateur can aspire and where he must stop—as though he could ever get so far." Ibn Khaldun: *Al-Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), vol 1, p 341, cf pp.366-7, 383.
4. al-Farazdaq, Hammām ibn Ghālib (640-730AD), Arab poet whose name and fame are closely related to two other poets: al-Akhtal and Jarīr. These three stood as the most prominent political poets in the Umayyad era. Al-Farazdaq was well received by Umayyad rulers especially the Caliph Abdull Malik ibn Marwan and his sons, al Walid, Sulaymān and Yazīd.
5. See Bashir Al-'Awwā in his interesting book *al-Ussrah bayn 'al-Jāhiliyyah wal Islām* (*Family between Jāhiliyyah and Islam*), p. 63. [Author's note]
6. A deep discussion of the sociological significance of the notions of need, utility and their relevance to the dynamics and working of human society is provided in Malik Bennabi's *Islam in History and Society*, trans. Asma Rashid (Kuala Lumpur, Berita Publishing, 1991), pp.45-58.
7. A comprehensive study and pertinent analysis of sexuality and sexual behaviour from an Islamic perspective has been made by the doyen of Tunisian sociologists Professor Abdel-wahab Bouhdiba in his *Sexuality in Islam*, translated from French by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.)

Religion and Social Relations

We have seen that human society does not create the moral values which regulate its life or, according to our terminology, the organization of the relations which enable it to carry out its concerted action.

We have also seen that this action starts when the synthesis of *Man, Soil and Time* is realized.

Nevertheless, this synthesis which is, historically speaking, at the origin of the advent of a civilization, does not occur spontaneously. The reason being that there are human groups which are still living in a state of pre-civilization.

Such synthesis takes place after the occurrence of an *extraordinary accident* or, alternatively, an *exceptional circumstance*.

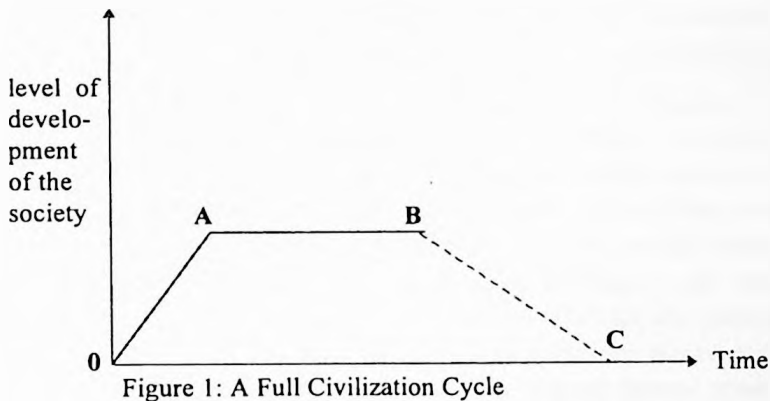
There are important differences of opinion between the various schools of thought as to how the essence of this *accident* can be determined and understood. In this connection, Toynbee maintains that it occurs in the form of a *challenge* posed by the natural or human environment in such a manner that the society finds itself compelled to face and respond to the challenge as we saw above. Hegel argues that the *exceptional circumstance* manifests itself in the form of a contradiction between a thesis and an anti-thesis.

In fact, contemporary societies are one of two categories: the category of *historical societies*, that is to say, the societies

which comply with the definition we proposed earlier for the term *society*; and the category of *stagnant* societies termed *primitive*.

As far as the historical category (which conforms to our definition, and includes about 80% of the total population of our planet) is concerned, the *exceptional circumstance* which marks the starting-point of a society in history coincides evidently with the advent of a religious ideal at the dawn of a civilization .

The development of such a civilization takes the form of a three-stage cycle that can be represented by the following diagram:



The zero point in the cycle represents the state preceding a civilization and points to the beginning of the occurrence of the *exceptional circumstance* necessary to generate the historical organic synthesis of the three factors: Man, Soil and Time. It is this synthesis that actually marks the birth of a society as it coincides, in certain respects, with the beginning of its historical

action.

At this point, the social values have not yet become a concrete reality. They are but mere possibilities. Moreover, the society itself is a mere possibility which belongs to the future course of history.

In this stage, the society exists only as a mere possibility which may, or may not, materialize, because its '*realm of persons*' and its '*realm of objects*' are not actualized yet, although its '*realm of ideas*' contains, at least, the seeds of its potentialities as a drop of sperm would contain all the psychological elements that would shape the future human being. Therefore, a society's existence is only an idea which may sometimes be embodied in a person such as Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) whom the Qur'an aptly describes as follows: "*Verily, Ibrahim was an ummah* " (Qur'an, 16:120).

Thus, whether we are concerned with the Islamic or the Christian society, or whether we are interested in the societies which have fossilized or those which have disappeared altogether, we can be certain that the idea which runs deep throughout the entire history of mankind is a religious idea. It follows from this that the *exceptional circumstance* which leads to the birth of a society coincides in reality with the advent of a religious ideal that would comprise all the society's potentials as the drop of sperm would contain all the filaments of the being which will come into existence. This means also that the social relations network as well as the threads and elements it includes and by means of which a society will be able to fulfil its historical mission, in short, all its future characteristics, are in a state of potentiality contained in the seed which is represented here by the religious idea.

Therefore, it is *the spiritual relationship between God and Man that creates and determines the social bonds which link every individual with his fellow humans*. As we have clearly seen

in the previous chapter, the birth of social relations takes place in the form of a moral value. Accordingly, we are in a position to see in both the social and religious relationships, from both the historical and the cosmic perspective, an occurrence and indication of one and the same movement of social change.

In addition to that, we find that the two events coincide with one another historically and are, in the course of social change, ontologically linked to one another by a cause-effect relationship. Thus, the social bond which links the individual to the society is the manifestation and shadow of the spiritual relationship as projected within the temporal context.

As we saw in chapter 7, the number of the relations which link the individual to a society made up of N members is $(N - X)$ relations.

By the same token, we can measure the degree of social efficacy of the religio-spiritual relationship by establishing an arithmetic ratio between the religious relationships in a specific society and the number of relations which constitute its social network. In this respect, it should be borne in mind that every individual enjoys $(N - X)$ social relations in a society whose members are represented by N , while he enjoys only one religious relationship. The efficacy of the latter relation can be expressed in the following equation:

$$\frac{N(N-X)}{N} = N - X$$

N

This means that religion creates a social order in which the individual is converted into numerous individuals, for he is multiplied by the number $(N-X)$ of social relations. The more the spiritual-religious relationship weakens, the smaller this number becomes. That is to say, it keeps decreasing inasmuch as the society keeps moving rightward on the **AB** segment in the cyclical scheme of its evolution. From the point **A** rightward, the

degree of social vacuum between the individuals will be widening within the framework of the society. On the contrary, the stronger the spiritual-religious relationship upward along the OA segment, the narrower the social vacuum is, so much so that the society approximates the picture pointed to in the *hadīth* of the Prophet, peace be upon him, stating that: '*A believer to a believer is like a building; whose different parts strengthen each other.*'¹ This is the picture of a society in which there is no social vacuum.

We know, however, that in order to reach such a level of perfection there must be a vigorous and animate social relations network that would provide the social edifice with strength and harmony. Yet, we hardly need to emphasize how challenging are the difficulties hindering the attainment of such an ideal. Indeed, this has always been the ideal that all legal systems strive to achieve by using all available human means so as to rectify any social vacuum. No doubt, this is the lesson which the glorious Qur'an taught to the Prophet, peace be upon him, when it addressed him:

".....for if thou hadst expended all that is on earth, thou couldst not have brought their hearts together (by thyself): but God did bring them together. Verily, He is almighty, wise." (Qur'an, 8: 63).

Translator's Note

1. Reported by Imam al-Bukharī in his *Sahīh* on the authority of Abū Mūsa al-Ash'ari, vol. viii, 'Book of Adab', chapter 36, p. 34, English translation of *Sahīh al-Bukharī* by Dr. Muhammad M. Khan (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 4th edn., 1979).

Social Relations Network and Geography

The examination of the cycle of civilization in general has enabled us in the preceding chapter to draw some conclusions concerning the sociological significance and influence of religion by taking into account the time factor. The study of the Christian cycle will allow us in the present chapter to discern the effects of the religious idea seen from the particular perspective of its relationship with the space factor.

As a matter of fact, Christianity and Islam differ from each other with respect to the historical circumstances of their expansion. Islam could actually accomplish its mission in the very cradle of its birth. If Islam could succeed in assuming its mission immediately in the Arabian Peninsula, this was mainly due to the fact that the latter was a virgin and fertile ground in which every novel religious idea could easily anchor its roots. The advent of Christianity, on the contrary, took place in a milieu which was encumbered with old religions and cultures, and thus Christianity could not, therefore, find sufficient free social elements by means of which to realize a new synthesis. The area had for a long time been occupied by both Graeco-Roman culture and Judaism.

In order to find a suitable environment, Christianity had then to emigrate from its cradle. This in fact shows the reason why, although born six centuries before Islam, Christianity started fulfilling its historical mission only at a later time, far from its place of birth.

Such a situation clearly shows to what extent the influence of a religious idea depends on some human and geographical conditions; if it does not find them in its original place, it would emigrate to seek them elsewhere.

Even Buddhism had to emigrate from its birthplace in India looking for a more appropriate environment which it found in China where it was able to establish itself.

Similarly, Christianity left the soil of its birth in Palestine seeking such favourable conditions in western Europe where the Roman civilization had already come to the end of its cycle in the 4th and 5th centuries AD.

Inasmuch as the West-European society of that time was disintegrating, Christianity could, thanks to the social elements resulting from that process of disintegration, construct gradually the new society which we at present call western society.

It is evident that because those elements were the result of a historical process of disintegration, there was no organic link that could unify them. In fact, the disappearance of the Roman Empire left all the constituent elements of the Roman society—i.e. *persons*, *ideas* and *objects*—in a state of anarchy and chaos, a situation which outstandingly characterized what has been termed the "Middle Ages."

In order for those elements to be assimilated into a new construction, it was therefore necessary that they be organized in a new and different fashion. It was the Christian faith that could shape the western order out of the chaos which resulted from the degenerate Roman civilization.

In this connection, Francois Guizot, the historian who continued to be an authority on European civilization for at least one century, alluded to this phenomenon. He demonstrated how the synthetic formation of this civilization was actually an effect of the Christian faith by stating that:

"... This has been the authentic and magnificent feature of the European civilization since it began evolving under the influence of the Gospel, both explicit and implicit, rejected or accepted, where both oppression and freedom have lived and grown together."¹

Translating this historian's judgement into sociological terms would mean that it was the Christian faith which had woven together the necessary network of relations which has enabled the Western society since its early days to engrave its concerted action in history. Likewise, he provides us with guidelines to the crux of our subject.

Thus, the Christian faith has moulded the ego of the European individual as it has shaped the scenery of Europe with which we are acquainted in the mid-twentieth century.

No doubt, looking at this *scenery*, one would surprisingly be struck by its unity as well as by the unity of the personality which endows it with dynamism and life, thus underlining a manifest affinity at the level of persons, ideas and objects. Indeed, this is a universal phenomenon.

Virtually, the development of mankind can be measured by the degree of the development of its religious feelings as embodied in the facts of the social reality thus shaping man's life and action on earth.

In its second issue of 1953, the *Diogenes* review published an interesting article by Pierre Desfontaines in which he gave pertinent insights into the "religious interpretation of human geography". Desfontaines demonstrated that man had used his intelligence not solely in his struggle against the forces of nature (where, according to him, man is in the encounter of fauna, winds, waters, deserts, etc.), but he has equally used it in his struggle against his own *ego* and against its various components - its ideas and beliefs as well as its feelings and whims. This

spiritual struggle has also shaped human geography by scattering on the face of the earth the religious reality along with its tangible effects manifested through the *landscape* [of life], especially in the fields of architecture, urban dwellings, economic activities and communication networks.

It is thus easy to discern in the present European scenery the manifestations of this *spiritual* action which has been carried out during the two millennia of Christian history.

No such action could have taken place without a network of social relations indispensable for the existence of any collective activity within the European society.

Accordingly, if one attempts to trace the spiritual action of Christianity over time, it will be the same as following the historical march of Europe in its entirety.

Consequently, writing the history of Europe or describing its *spiritual action* is in fact one and the same process in two different ways; i.e., whether we deal with the European phenomenon or with the Christian phenomenon, our enquiry will actually be directed to the same thing, for each of the two phenomena is super-imposed upon, and synchronizes with, the other. Alternatively, both phenomena depend upon one another whatever the signs of conflict and divergence that might be noticed. Such outward signs of conflict would readily disappear if one goes back two or three centuries in history because the term 'European' did not exist until the Napoleonic Wars, and, more precisely, the Congress of Vienna in 1814,² when it became part of the diplomatic discourse in Europe.

In spite of that, there has been, since the early Middle Ages, a *European phenomenon* which we should name as such because it is associated with the geographical scene of Europe, although the cultural reality of Europe depends on history. That is to say it depends upon the spiritual action of the Christian faith

over time throughout the process of both its emigration from its origin and its adaptation and settlement in Europe.

Hence, any event that has been recorded in the heroic moments of European history is in a way a real manifestation of the Christian faith.

In this respect, one can trace the course of the concerted action historically accomplished by the European society and, focusing on some of its features, one would be able to draw up the following table:

THE EUROPEAN PHENOMENON

- The end of the Roman Civilization.
- Feudalism.
- Latin: the official language of
Churches and Universities.
- The Crusades.
- The Renaissance.
- The Reformation.
- Colonialism starting with the
discovery of the American continent.
- The 1848 revolution which impacted
the whole of Europe.

If it is argued that both the Crusades and the 1848 Revolution were different manifestations of the same religious idea, it is very probable that such a view would be seen as self-contradictory, given the fact that the first event was actually a direct reflection of the influence of Christianity. The second one,

on the contrary, resulted from the scientific and secular ideas which were growing within the framework of the European culture in line with the philosophies of John Locke³ and the French Encyclopedists.⁴ This would imply that there is a manifest contrast between what was directly originating from the Christian faith and what was originating from the secular ideas. Nonetheless, these two events are actually the result of the concerted action of the same realms of persons, ideas and objects; i.e., they are the outcome and product of the collective activity of one and the same society thinking and acting in the same direction thanks to the same social relations network.

On the other hand, had we examined the events highlighted in the preceding table separately, we would in fact have broken the organic unity of a history.

Given the above remarks, we rather find that each one of those events draws its explanation from those preceding it: thus the 1848 Revolution developed in the same pattern as the Renaissance or the Crusades; that is, it was a manifestation of the Christian faith in a different way.

As a general rule, all that belongs to the *realm of objects* of Europe, to its *realm of ideas* or to its *realm of persons*, is necessarily part of the constitution of the European phenomenon. It is itself a European phenomenon, and it is thus an outcome of the social relations network which gave birth to the Crusades as it gave birth to the 1848 Revolution.

For instance, if we examine the radio as an element of Europe's *realm of objects* and then try to draw up a map of the cultural relations which led to it since the elementary and simple experiments made by Galvani⁵ up to the inventions made by Marconi, down through to Popov, Branley, Hertz,⁶ and many other pioneering inventors, we will discover that they actually constitute one and the same relations network. Were we then to draw on the same map the relations which led to the Reformation

or the Renaissance, we would be, in fact, drawing the same relations network according to which any European phenomenon can be seen as a Christian phenomenon.

Translator's Notes

1. As is often the case with Bennabi, he seldom gives references as to the views of scholars and thinkers he often mentions in his works. This has made it difficult for me to reference some of those views and opinions. See also translator's notes 1 and 2 to chapter 4.

2. Vienna, Congress of (1814 -15): European assembly convened at the instigation of the four victorious powers to redefine the territorial map of Europe after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. The negotiators were concerned to create a balance of power and to avoid alienating any major state; they incurred posterity's criticism by ignoring nationalism and perpetuating autocracy.

3. Locke, John (1632-1704): Philosopher, a formative influence on British empiricism and on theories of liberal democracy. He reacted against the prevailing scholasticism at Oxford and involved himself instead in experimental studies of medicine and science.

His *Two Treaties of Government* had been largely written earlier but were published anonymously, in 1690. They constitute his reply to the patriarchal Divine Right theory of Sir Robert Filmer and also to the absolutism of Hobbes. The *Treaties* present a social contract theory embodying a defence of natural rights and a justification for the constitutional law, the liberty of the individual and the rule of the majority. His other main works were: *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (initially published in 1689).

4. Encyclopedists, a collective term for the distinguished editors (Diderot and d'Alambert) and Contributors (notably Voltaire, Montesquieu, Condorcet, Helvetius and Rousseau) to the *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*, a major work of social and political reference published in France (1751-72) and associated with the French Enlightenment.
5. Galvani, Luigi (1737-98): Italian physiologist, born in Bologna. Educated in Bologna, where he became a professor of anatomy, and investigated the role of electrical impulses in animal tissue. The galvanometer is named after him.
6. a. Marconi, Guglielmo (1874-1937): Italian inventor, born in Bologna. He successfully experimented with wireless telegraphy in Italy and England, succeeded in sending signals across the Atlantic in 1901, and was awarded the Nobel prize for

physics in 1909.

b. Popov, Aleksandar Stepanovich (1859-1905): Russian physicist. Independently of Marconi, he is acclaimed in Russia as the inventor of wireless telegraphy (1895). He was the first to use a suspended wire as an aerial.

c. Branley, Edouard (1844-1940): French physicist and physician, who is best known for his "coherer", a device used in early wireless telegraph receivers to detect radio waves.

d. Hertz, Heinrich (Rudolf) (1857, Hambourg - 1894, Bonn): German physicist who was the first to broadcast and receive radio waves. In 1883 he began his studies of the electromagnetic theory of James Clark Maxwell. Between 1885 and 1889, while he was professor of physics at the Karlsruhe Polytechnic, he produced electromagnetic waves in the laboratory and measured their length and velocity. He showed that the nature of their vibration and their susceptibility to reflections and refraction were the same as those of light and heat waves. As a result, he established beyond doubt that light and heat are electromagnetic radiations. His scientific works which were published in English include: *Electric Waves* (1893), *Miscellaneous Papers* (1896) and *Principles of Mechanics* (1899).

Social Relations and Psychology

We tried to show that the real existence of a society starts with the formation of the network of its relations. We also tried to show in which circumstances and under which historical conditions this network is woven according to the different views of various schools of thought.

So far, this exercise in understanding the phenomenon of human society has dealt with the subject in sociological and quantitative terms. This allowed us to perceive in a clear manner the role of religion as it interacts in the social organization in the form of moral values embodied in the customs, traditions, attitudes, administrative regulations, principles and procedures of legislation, and even in the most manifest features of a society, such as the class structure of the Hindu society based on the caste system.

We shall now attempt to show under what conditions the individual is integrated in social life. Since the subject has been so far formulated in sociological terms, it is now high time to formulate it in psycho-sociological terms. We would particularly draw on the *conditioned reflex* theory with a view to giving Pavlov's insights a sociological interpretation.

Since we have already stressed the fact that human society is not a mere aggregate of individuals, it should be more precisely mentioned here that the basic unit of society is not the *raw individual*; rather it is the *conditioned individual*. That is,

nature provides the individual in a raw and elementary state. Then, it is the function of society to shape him in accordance with its specific objectives and orientation. This notion of moulding and adaptation is clearly expressed by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the following *hadith*:

"Every child is born in *fitrah* (natural disposition) and it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a magian."¹

Thus, it is this process of conditioning that qualifies the individual to acquire his position and fulfil his function in the society. It follows from this that we need to define in a general manner the relationship which is likely to occur between the conditioned reflexes that determine the individual's behaviour on the one hand, and the network of relations which allow the society to accomplish its concerted action on the other.

Accordingly, just as the individual and society, in normal circumstances, act and behave in one and the same direction, so too there is a process of *reciprocity* and *interaction* between the individual's conditioned reflexes and the social relations network. Furthermore, it is in light of this process of interaction and reciprocity that we have to expect the interference of religion at this level of the process of social integration.

It must be readily observed here that the power of the conditioned reflexes evolves simultaneously with the age of the society. In this connection, if Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī, in a moment of distress, did offend a person such as Bilāl, this is a manifest indication that the Islamic society was still in its embryonic stage as far as the psychology of the Muslim individual is concerned. Yet, we know at the same time that Abū Dharr's conscience was awakened, he was bowing at Bilāl's feet apologizing and begging forgiveness!²

This means that the individual acquires his conditioned reflexes through the same process by means of which the society

acquires its network of relations. Consequently, the relationship between the two aspects of the subject is an inextricable one: *it is a historico-genic relationship in that it is human society which creates the individual's conditioned reflexes while it is the latter that fosters the process of evolution of the society.*

On the basis of this interaction and reciprocity process, we are in a position to see in any social ailment an indication of the existence of a state of corruption in the relations network or a sign of degeneration in the system of the conditioned reflexes.

As we saw previously, whatever the societies which have disappeared from history or have survived in fossil forms, thus being labeled as 'primitive societies',—without adopting any value judgement towards them—all the roots of contemporary societies can be traced back to profound metaphysical roots.

To address the problem in psychological terms would mean to reach the same conclusion through a different path. That is, in order for the individual to be integrated in a given network of social relations, he would have to embody within himself a certain psychological process. This psychological assimilation is a necessary condition for the acceptance and adaptation of the individual in social life. It, in turn, runs deep in the metaphysical order of things.

We have also mentioned previously that the *raw individual* is not the main unit of the society but rather the *conditioned individual*. In this respect, experimental psychology has been familiar, since Pavlov, with the notion of the *conditioned reflex* and has thus dealt with things from a functional perspective and not from an analytical one.

Therefore, the investigation will be conducted, in what follows, from a sociological perspective according to which the process of the individual's integration in the network of social relations will be seen as much as an operation of *filtration* on

the one hand, and of *selection*, on the other. This twofold process takes place in an organized society in normal circumstances through schooling, that is, education. In contrast, at the formative stage of a society, such a process starts spontaneously within the psycho-temporal conditions that conform to what was called above the *exceptional circumstance*, thus coinciding with the advent of society and civilization.

Likewise, the mechanism of conditioned reflexes in the case of a person like al-Ghazālī was moulded by the educational process, whereas it spontaneously came about in the case of a companion like Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī.

However, the end result of the psychological process in both cases is the same in that the individual gets rid of a set of anti-social trends and attitudes and acquires, instead, new trends and attitudes compatible with the needs of a society.

This is exactly the conditioning process which the individual undergoes: it is a filtering process by means of which the individual becomes irresponsive to some stimuli bearing a primitive instinctive character (such as the impetuosity which would easily drive the Arabs of the pre-Islamic era to take revenge). It is, on the other hand, a selective or assimilative process which makes the individual responsive to more sublime incentives of, for instance, an ethical or aesthetic nature.

From a psychological point of view, this process can be considered a construction of the *self* or, to put it differently, a determination of the constituent elements of the individual's personality.

In this connection, Jung³ could illustrate that the shaping of the personality depends on a universal psychological background common to the human species, and simultaneously draws upon the accumulated experiences which mankind has undergone since her early days.

Accordingly, the individual upon his birth bears within himself the quintessence of those experiences: he receives 'upon his birth' a certain psychological heritage just as he acquires his genetic characteristics through heredity. It is this psychological heritage that constitutes the subconscious and represents the stock of beliefs and superstitions that mankind has accumulated in her psyche since the dawn of history.

According to Jung, the religious past of mankind is always present in the psyche of the individual and manifests itself now and then through various patterns of his activities such as in dreams by taking the form of symbols, and in his thinking in the form of unconscious allegories.

Interestingly, the recurrence of the religious past of mankind in like manner manifests itself even in the case of an atheist in the form of such allegories.

The following statement is but one example:

"For more than three decades now, there has been adopted and implemented a philosophy based on the fact that human life has no meaning—in all times—unless it is oriented to serve eternity!"⁴

The reader might well be eager to know about the mystic or monk who spelled out such a statement. Surprisingly however, these were but the words of an atheist who was addressing—before committing suicide—his friend Trotsky, another atheist.

It was thus the subconscious of the man that reflected itself through that statement which sprung up from the stock of his inborn nature. Yet, his dialectical materialism quickly intervened to put an end to what his pen was spontaneously reflecting in such a way that he concluded his statement as follows: '... as far as we are concerned, *solitude is our eternity.*'

It is clear that the man was experiencing a moment of

enthusiasm in which he was not able to come to terms with his conditioned thinking; but, as soon as that moment was over, he tried his best to remove any doubt from the mind of his friend Trotsky, as regards his fanatic commitment to Marxism.

Nevertheless, this example does not provide us with a complete picture about the phenomenon under consideration, although it shows us how the religious past of mankind, remote as it might be, manifests itself through the thinking of even an atheist.

The psychological make-up of the individual, at least in the historical societies, is so embedded in religiosity which is an integral part of his nature. To this effect, sociology has defined the human being as *a religious animal*. This definition underscores an aspect of the universal psychological background, common to all the individuals of the species, according to which every individual builds up his personality.

It follows from the above that religion intervenes in this psychological make-up too, that is in the determination of the constituent elements of the individual's personality or selfhood. Therefore, it directly intervenes in the process of conditioning and adaptation which consists, as we saw earlier, of a twofold operation: filtration, on the one side, and selection/assimilation, on the other.

Moreover, in order to give a precise definition of the social role and significance of religion, it should be stated that the process of conditioning consists of discord, on the one side, and accord, on the other. It results from this process that the conditioned and adapted individual would be different and distinguished from the non-conditioned one, for he would have to be moulded in accordance with the archetype of the society in whose relations network he is integrated and assimilated.

There are varying opinions as to the interpretation of this

psychological process itself. In this regard, Jung distinguishes between two sides at the level of the individual: the *persona*³ and the *metapersona*, or what he calls *shadow*. By *persona* is meant the side directed to the society, while *shadow* points to the side which is directed towards nature and the instincts, that is towards what is sensual and biological.

The *shadow* consists of the vital energy in its unconditioned state of nature and thus it stands in contrast to the social status. Thus, every individual *instinct operates* separately for the sake of its own satisfaction without being subject to any law except that of satisfaction.

Conversely, the *persona* represents the sphere within which the adaptation and conditioning process of the vital energy takes place in a manner conducive to transforming it into a socially useful and utilized energy. Hence, it is the sphere in which the decent and cultured individuals become subservient to the conscience and thereby their integration into social life is achieved according to the dictates of conscience, not merely as a response to instinctual drives.

Consequently, it is a fundamental integrating process which endows the activity of the natural instincts with full social efficacy by making the vital energies subservient to a set of ideals and principles.

It is a fact of nature that the human being must drink, eat, procreate, possess and struggle for the preservation of his species. Yet, he has to control all these primary natural activities and orient them towards certain objectives which would conform with the progress and development of the species.

Likewise, he actually participates in the Divine scheme of action. However, looking at the question from the perspective of religion, this participation is subject to the human being's religious accountability (*taklīf*) in that he is subject to the law of

moral progress. Therefore, if it is his nature that drives him to action, it is his conscience that endows his action with its historical and moral significance.

Thus, man is driven to action by his natural instinctual disposition in order to preserve the species, while he is inspired by his conscience so as to promote its progress and advancement. He is therefore endowed with a twofold capacity. Yet, it is his religious accountability that regulates the internal structure of this capacity in such a manner that the integrated activities of man's instincts and vital energy are brought into compliance with his social mission.

It is from this structure that the order of social conditioned reflexes emanates. Moreover, the various phases of these reflexes often coincide with the primary phases of social construction. They may also sometimes have pathological implications such as in the case of *repression*.

In this respect, psychologists have extensively dealt with the psychological operations which are quite similar to what we named above: *filtration/selection*. This determines, in the last analysis, the social behaviour of the individual.

If we study, for instance, the theory expounded by J.A. Hadfield, it will help us to perceive the role played by ideas and principles in the construction of the *self*. This in fact is the very role of religion. Besides, we find that a portion of those operations is of a constructive character in that it is question of a process regulating and organizing the instincts and vital energy in relation to their connection with the basic equilibrium of the individual; while another portion is, in contrast, of a pathological character because it stands in opposition to some aspects of the vital energy, by exerting a kind of *repression* over some instinctual impulses.

Consequently, religion, as a regulative psychological force,

plays a fundamental role not only as a set of guiding principles and values that would become, once embraced and assimilated by the *self*, norms and incentives for the individual's behaviour, but also because its prohibiting nature may have pathological manifestations when it amounts to mere *repression*.

Therefore, religion has almost a total influence on the personality, whether with regard to the determination of its basic components or with regard to generating, in some exceptional cases, [some] pathological situations when the religious factor disintegrates and degenerates as will be shown below.

In addition to nurturing the general spiritual sources of the personality as demonstrated above, the religious factor plays a direct role in shaping the *individual* conscious ego and in regulating the vital energy which originates from the natural instincts and is made subservient to the *self*.

Furthermore, since this organized vital energy is converted into a social activity at the level of the individual, and since the individual's activity stands at the basis of the concerted action of the society in history, this clearly shows the importance of the role played by the religious factor in two different ways.

Moreover, it is this psychological mechanism that, above all, generates the *perpetual movement* as its activity takes the form of recurrent operations and processes.

As it originates from the natural instincts and becomes organized through the adaptation/conditioning process whereby it is made subservient to the *self*, the vital energy is actually brought under the control of the person's *will*.

This means that the *will* is responsible for allocating the vital energy among the various sectors of the individual's social activity, and subsequently for generating and allocating the concerted action of the community. Although the *will* exerts such a degree of control over the vital energy, its function is in turn

subject to a certain psychological process. From this arises the question of the orientation of the vital energy which is thus put at the service of the self

It would be helpful at this stage to resort to the explanation given by Hadfield, in his book *Psychology and Ethics*,⁶ as a solution to this problem. In this book, the author deals with things from a physician's point of view, that is from a pathological perspective.

From the beginning, Hadfield raises the following question:

What is the appropriate stimulus to motivate the will?

Then he answers as follows:

The ideal is the major factor in the determination of both man's morale and behaviour, because it is alone capable of stimulating his will and organizing all his natural instincts.

He thus attempts to show that the vital energy which is made subservient to the ego is, in the last analysis, under the controlling power of what he has called the 'Ideal'. He also unintentionally shows that not only the organization of the natural instincts is subject to that control, but that the orientation of the various social activities of the individual is equally subject to such controlling power. This inference is clearly implied in his statement: '*the determination of both man's morale and behaviour.*'

Accordingly, the choice of the 'Ideal' is one of the crucial problems facing us at the individual level with regard to the 'organization of the vital energy', and at the social collective level with regard to the 'orientation and allocation of that vital energy.'

Hence, another question arises which is formulated by Hadfield as follows:

Should everybody be left free to follow the path he thinks appropriate to lead to the Ideal?

If we do so, a burglar, for example, would find his 'Ideal' in robbery and the pursuit of violence!

This makes it evident that such 'freedom' will not in the end, be in accordance neither with the interests of the individual nor with those of the society. On the other hand, if we were to prevent the individual from the freedom of choice, we would be making of him a 'deaf machine' or an 'artificial creature', and not a human being who makes use of his vital energy for the sake of high objectives which he clearly and consciously perceives.

This choice is subject to a twofold condition which Hadfield expounds as follows:

It has been proven by experience that the individual's choice of his Ideal is the most appropriate way that guides towards happiness. However, this choice, as Hadfield points out, "is far more sublime than being the outcome of a mere personal judgement made by the individual." As a result, he contends that "there is 'an objective Ideal' which is in compliance with the moral traditions that sum up the long experience of the human species."

Thus given the fact that these 'traditions' are the embodiment of the moral values in which the religious factor occupies foundational place, the question of the orientation of the vital energy is, in turn, a religious question in essence.

Accordingly, it is manifestly clear from the psychological point of view that the religious factor plays a fundamental role both in generating the basic spiritual energy of the individual and in organizing and allocating the vital energy subservient to the *ego*. Similarly, its role is crucial with regard to the orientation of that energy according to both the requirements of the specific

activity of the *ego* and the demands of the concerted action carried out by the society in history.

Translator's Notes

1. This *hadīth* is reported by both Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim. al-Bukhārī reported it in his *Sahih*, 'Kitāb al-Janā'iz' (Book of Funerals) on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, while Muslim reported it in 'Kitāb al-Qadar' (Book of Fate) of his *Sahih*. It is also reported by Imām Mālik ibn Anas in his *al-Mawatta* on the authority of Abū Hurayrah with some additions.
2. The author refers here to what was reported in books of *sīrah* (biography) and *hadīth* about Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī when, being in a state of anger, he burst out against Bilāl calling him "son of negroid!" Then, realizing the extent of his transgression against the teachings of Islam on the equality of men irrespective of their race, colour, wealth etc., Abū Dharr knelt at Bilāl's feet begging his forgiveness and pardon, and requesting him to take revenge. May Allah (swt) be pleased with all the beloved Companions of the beloved Prophet! See the story as reported by Bukhārī in *Sahih Al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1992) vol 1, part 1, *Hadīth* No 30, p.16.
3. Jung, Carl Gustav (1875-1961): Swiss Psychiatrist, born in Basel. His early studies in World Association (1904-09) (in which he coined the term "Complex") and The Psychology of Dementia Praecox (1906-07) led to his meeting Sigmund Freud in Vienna, 1907. He became Freud's leading collaborator and was elected president of the International Psychoanalytical Association (1910). His independent researches, making him increasingly critical of Freud's insistence on the psychosexual origins of the neuroses, which he published in his book *The Psychology of the Unconscious* (1911-12), caused a break in 1913. He then developed his own school of 'analytical psychology'.
Amongst his main works are: *On Psychic Energy* (1928), *Psychology and Religion* (1937), *The Undiscovered Self* (1957) and *Psychological Types* (Zurich 1920, recently published in paperback by Routledge, London 1989).
4. This statement is taken from Walter Schubart's book *Europe and the Spirit of the Orient*, p. 191. He himself quoted it from Trotsky's book *All the Truth about Russia*. [Author's note]
5. *Persona* refers to the mask with which an actor would cover his face on the Roman stage so as to imitate the personality whose role was meant to be played. [Author's note]
In Jungian analytic psychology, *persona* is the mechanism that conceals a person's true thoughts and feelings, especially in adaptation to the outside world. See Carl G. Jung: *Psychological Types* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 464-777.

6. Most probably, Bennabi refers to the Arabic translation of Hadfield's book under the title *'Ilm al-Nafs wal 'Akhlaq* done by Muhammad Abdul Hamid Abū al-'Izz, and edited by 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Qūṣī (published by Maktabat Misr, Cairo, 1953). While preparing this book for the press we could not have access to that book so as to reference Bennabi's quotations from it. As for Hadfield, he was a British psychologist who was associated for some time with Carl G.Jung.

The Notion of Social Education

Can all that has preceded help us develop a theory of social education; that is, a theory that would guide the march of a society in history?

We saw earlier that the movement of human society depends on its network of relations, and that any change or alteration in the shape and form of a society is actually an outcome of its concerted action.

Similarly, it was shown that there is a certain reciprocity between the network of relations in a society and the system of responses and reactions of the conditioned and adapted individual.

It thus follows that the problem is one and the same conceived at two levels or from two different perspectives: the perspective of the human soul and spirit on the one hand, and that of the social time, on the other.

This reciprocity was expressed by a historian like Francois Guizot when he stated that:

"the problem of history can be dealt with in two different ways: either we solve it at the level of the individual himself by examining all that contributes to shaping and transforming his personality, or we solve it at the level of his general environment by studying the conditions that affect his social milieu".

Accordingly, if we admit that a theory of social education can be developed, it should then be stressed, at the outset, that its general rules have to be derived from history, sociology and psychology.

So far, the methodology we have followed has primarily depended upon history with the view to deriving those rules both in their theoretical and applied forms. It has to be emphasized here that such rules represent the constants of history never affected by the vicissitudes of time which alter human societies. Accordingly, the renaissance and reconstruction of any society can never be realized except under the same conditions and according to the same laws of its very genesis.

It is these laws themselves that were expressed differently in the famous Prophetic tradition stating that:

"Never will the affairs of the later generations of this Ummah be set on the right path except by that which has guided its early generations."¹

An attempt was also made to expound them by means of a diagram (chapter 11). At this stage of the discussion, we shall try to examine them in more specific terms.

It might be easily seen that the psycho-temporal values represented by the vertical axis denote the level of development of the social relations network of a society as well as the social level of the system of its conditioned reflexes at any stage of its history. In this light, one can identify the relationship between these two concepts and each of the three phases depicted in the diagram.

1. *The spiritual stage*, which is represented by the *OA* segment, can be interpreted in two ways. From a sociological point of view, it corresponds to the situation where the social relations network is at its highest level of density but not at its largest degree of expansion. The notion of density is clearly

implied by the expression '*firm and compact building*' in the following Qur'anic verse: '*Verily, God loves (only) those who fight in his cause in (solid) ranks, as though they were a building, firm and compact.*' (Qur'an: 61, 4).

We can also interpret this stage from a psychological point of view by saying that it corresponds to the state in which the individual is in his best condition, that is the condition under which the system of his conditioned reflexes reaches its utmost efficacy as his vital energy attains its optimum level of organization and orientation.

This is the golden age of any society not only because it reaches the peak of its prosperity and flourishing, but because it is characterized by two outstanding features: [first,] all its forces and energies are in a state of movement; [second,] this movement is an ascending one.

Moreover, this stage is also characterized by total dynamism in such a manner that any trend of slackness and apathy is readily condemned such as was the case, in early Muslim history, with the *mukhallafin*, (the three who fell prey to corruption).²

2. As far as the second stage is concerned, the society enjoys a well-developed relations network which has attained its full expansion. Nevertheless, the relations network at this stage suffers from some defects and deficiencies which start surfacing on the society's course of life. Such was, for instance, the situation of the Muslim society during the *Abbasid* era when the *Aghlabid* dynasty in the *Maghrib* and North Africa as well as the *shu'ūbiyyah* (chauvinist nationalist) movement in the *Mashriq* (East) and Persia came into existence.

To put it in psychological terms, this means that the Muslim society, so affected by the (*shock of Siffin*),³ has become such that the Muslim individual no longer exerts full control over his vital energy in the course of undertaking his social function,

i.e., part of his natural instincts was no more subject to his conditioned reflexes mechanism.

However, the society was still running its course of development and progress in this stage thanks to the initial drive imparted to it in the preceding stage, though not all its forces are at work. Moreover, not all the forces in action carry on an upward movement. Rather, part of the society's forces and energies have fallen into a state of apathy, whereas another part has gone into the abyss. In Muslim history, this situation can be exemplified by the *Murji'ah* and al-Qarāmita⁴ movements respectively. The former completely fell into a state of apathy, whereas the latter was operating in opposition to the direction of the society or, to put it in more precise terms, against its ideal itself.

3. In the third stage, the natural instincts of the individuals disintegrate and are no longer under control. They no longer function as a harmonious whole. Rather, they operate individually in pursuit of selfish interests due to the fact that the conditioning order of the vital energy has broken down. Thus, the vital energy loses its social function and is no more subject to the conditioned reflexes mechanism which is supposed to promote the process of adaptation and orientation of that energy.

Consequently, it is individualism that prevails as a result of the freedom of the instincts, thus the social relations network is totally dissolved.

This stage in the history of a society marks the age of decline and decadence. In Muslim history, it coincides with the age in which a state of *colonizability* anchors its roots thus paving the way to *colonialism*.

Likewise, it has been demonstrated that the history of a society is but the history of both its relations network and of the conditioned reflexes system of its archetype: the conditioned and

adapted individual.

Now, going back to the question we raised in the beginning of this chapter with regard to the rules of social education, we can, in light of the previous discussion, *conclude that in order to influence the way of life in a given society as well as the behaviour of its archetype, i.e., in order to construct an efficient system of social education, it is imperative to have a manifest and clear-cut idea about the relations and reflexes that govern the utilization and orientation of the vital energy at the level of both the individual and the society.*

So far, we have been following an analytical methodology, theoretical in nature, in developing and formulating our views; in such an exercise it is preferable, however, to prove the conclusions reached through analysis by a cross-examination; that is, by means of synthesization. It must be noted that, although we have sometimes resorted in the preceding chapters of this study to the realities of history to warrant our theoretical inferences, we however feel that this might not be sufficient especially when taking account of the fact that the historical facts, stripped of their organic context, do not provide any precise idea about the activity of the forces of history whose theoretical schema we have attempted to trace.

It is therefore essential to examine the historical action and process in their dynamic course through which the individual is endowed with the power and capability of adaptation in various circumstances. It is also in this process that the individual becomes, under the control of his conditioned reflexes order, an integral part of the society's concerted action carried out thanks to the relations network.

In fact, the study of history in the course of its genesis, i.e., the examination of the formative process of a society at the time of its birth, is the best way to test the theoretical probabilities pertaining to a given society.

This approach, we believe, will enable us to conceive the role played by religion in its full efficacy and dynamism thus fulfilling, both directly and indirectly, its social function and driving towards its specific objectives. Likewise, religion creates the spiritual web which totally imbues the human society with belief and faith in God. Through this very process, religion weaves, as shown previously, the social relations network which enables a society to carry out its common activities in a manner that would link 'heavenly' imperatives to 'earthly' necessities.

Accordingly, when the Qur'an states that: *"(And tell them that) I have not created the invisible beings (jinn) and men to any end other than that they may know and worship Me"* (Qur'an: 51, 56), it should by no means be understood that God Almighty has willed, by this law, to bifurcate man from the earth. Rather, He has willed to open for mankind a far better way to fulfil her worldly mission.

Indeed, history bears witness to the fact that the people of religion, and the Muslims in particular, have achieved the highest levels of capacity and efficiency just because they have followed this path as prescribed by the Qur'anic verse.

Yet, it should be known that the primordial condition to successfully follow this path is to generate the order of conditioned reflexes that would mould the individual's behaviour. This psychological transformation is actually both the prelude to life within the society and the psychological condition for any social change.

Has not this been expounded by the glorious Qur'an as it states that:

"Verily, God will not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves!" (Qur'an: 13:11).

Likewise, it is manifestly clear that whatever changes the soul will transform the society. It is, as well, an established truth

that the most profound and most magnificent patterns of change which have ever occurred in the history of mankind are those which coincide with the flourishing and the fulfilment of a religious ideal.

Had one been able to follow with accurate means the unfolding influence of the religious ideal upon its birth, then one would be highly astonished by the many unexpected dimensions it encompasses.

Indeed, one would need to practise some educational experiments in order to comprehend the exciting transformations that may occur in the individual exposed to them. Such a situation can easily be seen in a primitive human environment newly exposed to an educational process; not only would the ideas disseminated thereby affect the minds of the recipients, but they would also reflect their effects in their faces and appearances.⁵

The religious ideal thus exerts its transformational influence both in the features and behaviour of the individual by changing his inner self. Accordingly, the social educational system [meant here] would manifest its influence even through the embellishment of the individual's appearance; that is, a set of conditioned reflexes would lead to the emergence of a new mould as if a new human being had come into existence.

This would only mean that a head is shaped according to the ideas it contains. In short, the society moulds its model not only at the psychomental level but also at the physiological level.

Once again, had one been able to witness the moment of birth and genesis of the Islamic society, one would very probably have perceived the sequence of transformations that were overwhelming the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, not only as regards their psychological traits but also as regards their physiologocal features.

Unfortunately, Islamic history has not provided us with documents about the decorative and aesthetic transformation that must have accompanied the birth of the Islamic society. However, it has provided us with documents that would confirm the theoretical considerations mentioned above in such a way that would endow them with an educational value so far as the renaissance and reconstruction of the Muslim society is concerned.

In the foregoing discussion, we have been able to determine the elements that constitute the subject-matter of social education. This consists essentially in converting the genetic qualities of the *individual* inherited from the species into social attributes that would determine the characteristics of the *person*; that is to say, to transform the vital energy, driven to action by means of the instinctual impulses, into a social energy subordinated to the mechanism of conditioned reflexes bound up with the individual's process of adaptation.

Similarly, this means creating the network of relations which can unify the instinctual energies in the form of a concerted action carried out by the society to achieve its goals.

These are, in broad terms, the concepts as well as dimensions of social education.

We have thus shown the role of religion in this respect as it intervenes substantially in the creation of the conditioned reflex order at the level of the adapted individual as well as in the weaving of the relations network that allows the society to undertake its collective activity.

So, the clearer and deeper our understanding of the role of this factor in the *birth of a society*, the more precise and accurate will be our perception of its role in the *renaissance* of such a society, and thus we will understand properly the sociological meaning of the famous tradition cited earlier:

Never will the affairs of the later generations of this Ummah be set on the right path except by that which has guided its early generations!

Translator's Notes

1. See translator's note to the preface on page 4
2. The '*Mukhallafīn* or *ath-Thalathah alladhina khullifū*': those who "had been left behind" at the time of the expedition to Tabuk; the commentators "assume that it is a reference to three persons—namely, Ka'b ibn Mālik, Marārah ibn ar-Rabī' and Hilāl ibn Umayyah (all of them from among the Ansār)—who abstained from the campaign and were therefore ostracized by the Prophet and his Companions" until the verse clearing their case was revealed (Surah At-Taubah, verse 118); see Muhammad Asad: *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar-Al-Andalus, 1984), p. 283 - 84. The story is also reported by Imam al-Bukhārī in his *Sahīh*.
3. Siffin refers to the place where the armed conflict between Ali ibn Abī Talib and Mu'awayyah ibn Abī Sufyān took place in the year 38 of the Islamic calendar. These events are considered by many Muslim thinkers, including Bennabi himself, to have dealt a heavy blow to the Islamic consultative (political) system of *Khilāfah*.
4. a. *al-Murji'ah* or Murji'ites: One of the sects in early Islamic history, the extreme opponents of *al-Khawarij* (Kharijites). The latter thought that a Muslim, by committing a mortal sin (*kabīrah*), becomes *kāfir* (infidel).

The *Murji'ah*, on the other hand, were of the opinion that a Muslim does not lose his faith by committing such sin. This doctrine led them to a far-reaching quietism in politics; according to their doctrine, the *imam* who was guilty of mortal sin did not cease to be a Muslim and must be obeyed. The *salāt* [prayer] performed behind him was valid.

b. *al-Qarāmitah*: In the strict application of the word, the name was given to the rebel federations of Arabs and 'Nabateans' which were organized in Lower Mesopotamia after the war of the *Zandj* (Negroes) from 264 H/877 AD and based on a system of communism; active propaganda extended this secret society among peasants and artisans—in al-Ahsā', where they founded a state independent of the Caliphate in Baghdad, in Khurāsān, in Syria and Yemen, where they formed lasting hotbeds of discontent.

This movement, which seems to have derived most of its ideological principles and beliefs from the *Isma'ili* gnostic system and from some pre-Islamic Persian and other traditions of thought, has been a topic of major concern for a host of writers (from both right and left) who claim discovering in it the positive revolutionary and egalitarian aspects of Islam!

5. For a more detailed analysis of this theme, see Bennabi's *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, translated from French by Mohamed T. El-Mesawi (Petaling Jaya, (Malaysia): Budaya 'Ilmu Sdn. Bhd., 1994), Chapter II, pp. 11-17.

Social Relations Network and Colonialism

We have demonstrated above that the function of the social relations network is to insure the society's survival and continuity as well as to preserve its character over time. We saw also that another aspect of that function consists in organizing the society's vital energy so as to enable it to carry out its concerted action in history.

It is evident that one can hardly claim that the colonizing powers are unaware of the importance of these factors in a colonized country for they apply, in this respect, an appropriate policy.

To give just one example of the manifold ways through which this policy manifests itself, it suffices to tell a brief story narrated to me by my father who worked as an official in a colonial administrative service in the south-eastern region of Algeria. The director of that service, a prominent scholar,¹ was assuming his responsibility and performing his task according to the dictates of his conscience rather than the high political considerations of the colonial administration. Thus, he succeeded in reconciling two local families who had been at odds with each other for a very long time. As he was very much delighted and happy about his achievement, he related the story to a senior officer of the colonial administration in the presence of a wide audience. However, this senior officer burst out angrily at the poor scholar, who was obviously lost in the intrigues of the colonial machinery, saying to him: "Monsieur Reygass, we did

not send you here as a judge of reconciliations to settle the conflicts which may sometimes be beneficial to our higher interests!"

This simple story is sufficient to show how the colonial powers cleverly follow the spirit of the maxim '*divide and rule*.' It is a high obligation to be aware of the daily implications of such a policy.

Unfortunately, we bear in our personality structure some sort of 'lens' which oddly distort our vision in this respect: we perfectly perceive the activities of colonialism when they are tangible and can be seen, but once these activities become subtle and sophisticated like the devil's intrigues, we are no longer able to perceive either their scope or their means!

We could, for example, perceive the colonial means used to crush the Algerian Revolution such as tanks, bombers or napalm bombs, for these are seen and tangible means whose balance-sheet has been one million Algerian martyrs, which means that a significant portion of our vital energy was destroyed.

We may also be able to perceive the activities of colonialism when the Algerian people succeeded, in one of the most decisive moments of its history, to pool its forces on the path of the sublime doctrine of *Islāh*,² thus creating a large social relations network which was clearly manifested during the Popular Islamic Congress in 1936.³

The colonial masters did not resort this time to their regiments nor to their armoured machine in order to damage the vital energy of the Algerian people or to destroy its social relations network. It sufficed them to only assassinate a prominent personality so that chaos and anarchy immediately prevailed! Then, an amount of money crept into the conscience of a certain *za'im* (political leader) who personified, at a certain

stage, both the country's vital energy and the ideal of its struggle!

Subsequently, it was the 'political parties' that carried on the rest of the colonial task, each according to its own strategy; yet they were all aspiring to inherit the Algerian Popular Islamic Congress. They did their best to manipulate and exploit the social network which expressed itself for the first time at the level of the national consciousness.

This somewhat subtle activity could, however, be clearly perceived.

Thus, the activities of colonialism are regularly promoted in more subtle and complicated ways to such an extent that it becomes almost totally beyond our ability to perceive their far-reaching implications. This is because our mental status and attitudes prevent us from following the intrigues and discerning the grain-of-sand-like means used by colonialism. In such a situation, it would suffice that a single grain of sand enters the engine to put it out of order. In other words, *just as a 'nothing' would suffice to paralyze the nervous system of a living being, so too would a 'pin sting' in a sensitive area be sufficient to bring paralysis into the social relations network of a colonized country.*

This, in fact, is a fine art similar to the cultivation of pearls in which Japan has attained the highest achievements.

We very well know that those who work for colonialism are highly skilled and qualified and they apply their skill to erode the social relations network and the vital energy of a people subjected to the yoke of colonialism or threatened by its conspiracies and designs.

The above instances would have undoubtedly shown the reader what those artists could have done in an Arab Muslim country like Algeria in order to destroy the web of its socio-political relations and to sow the seeds of anarchy in its vital

energy which was pooled and organized in the Popular Islamic Congress.

In the following sections of this chapter, we shall show how the masters of colonialism make use of some *rodent-like agents* carefully brought up in western cultural seats in order to undermine the cultural and moral bonds in a given country. These *rodent-like agents* will of course always claim that they are representatives of the national culture!

Suffice it to look around us to see in our countries these *rodent-like agents* who are pushed onto the stage—even at the international level—by such invisible hands so as to undermine any value [cherished by the people] and transform it into a non-value.

It would be to no avail to demonstrate how colonialism has succeeded in such swindles for this would require one to cite instances that would appear, because of our unrealistic attitudes, improbable or imaginary.

However, one shall reservedly mention only a few examples.

Let us suppose that a famous man, resolutely committed to the ideological and intellectual struggle taking place in Arab and Muslim countries, wants to express his sympathy towards an intellectual who also participates in this struggle and who is in need, because of the pressure of some special circumstances and for the sake of intellectual work, of a retreat for some time. Let us also suppose that the former has, on his own account, offered the latter a one-month stay in a hotel without setting any maximum limit for the expenses that the retreat would incur.

Of course, such a situation would reflect a certain social relationship both at the moral and cultural levels. But it is of great concern for the skilled artists we are speaking about.

Needless to say, these artists would try their best to make the stay so disgusting that it would be worthless both psychologically and physically. Herein, we are trying to demonstrate the efficacy of the grain of sand that can be inserted in the situation.

So then, how would those artists carry out their task? They have, of course, thousands of ways to do it, and the following is but one.

At the end of his stay, our intellectual, asking for his bill for signature before leaving the hotel, may surprisingly note that part of the expenses is put under the item '*bar*' although he has never been to that place in the hotel!

One may have sufficient reasons to believe that the word '*bar*' is the tiny grain of sand used to damage a specific relationship in the field of the intellectual and ideological struggle.

No doubt, the rodent-like agent who has inserted the word '*bar*' in the bill instead of '*whisky*' or '*cognac*' would have done so because he is well aware that the latter words would most probably draw the man's attention while signing the bill.

It is quite natural, then, that our rodent-like artist would apologize and correct the '*error*' by substituting, for example, the word '*Coca Cola*' for that of '*bar*' if the person in question has actually noticed the matter.

But suppose the word '*bar*' has remained in the bill, the question then is: how would it be used as a grain of sand?

Nothing is easier than this. The bill would be taken to its final destination in one way or another and the attention of the generous, good man would be drawn to the word '*bar*' with the least possible comment.

Henceforth, it is quite easy to imagine the damaging effect

of this word on the feelings of the good man if the remark was so cleverly disguised.

Moreover, these expert artists can play the same role in a different way by inflating the bill with unnecessary and worthless expenses that would harm both the host and the guest.

However, the crux of the problem we face in both cases lies in the fact that we display so much indifference and unawareness with regard to such intrigues and thus we fail to give them due concern despite the fact that their effects are at the origin of much of our daily social losses.

We are unfortunately unable, due to our mental attitudes and traditions, to perceive the activities of colonialism unless they are performed with much noise like that of guns, tanks or bombers. In contrast, when these activities are performed by expert artists or rodent-like agents, they reach beyond our awareness for the only reason that they make no noise.

Besides, it is so unfortunate to note that the best amongst our intellectual elite are not immune to such a malady which stems entirely, in my opinion, from the overall evolution of our societies which have not yet developed their standards and criteria; and if they have ever done so, this is mostly according to the logic of objects rather than ideas.

Not only do our mental attitudes prevent us from perceiving the activities of colonialism which aim at destroying our social relations network, but they are also *'the curtain'* which veils our recklessness and indifference.

I have a friend⁴ who is for me more than a brother. He is a renowned physician and one of the foremost intellectuals in Algeria. Whenever we discuss a matter or reflect on a given issue, we reach the same conclusions and formulate similar views. But, as soon as the circumstances of life bring us to work together, we would, unfortunately, be at odds and diverge from

each other.

In fact, our experiences are so different from each other that whenever I arrange to take, in the course of our struggle against colonialism, some precautionary measures which may be seen by someone else, a European intellectual for example, very much inadequate, my friend would consider them too much exaggerated!

Thus, colonialism finds its best allies in our own mental and psychological attitudes and traditions.

Suppose, for instance, that the colonial masters wanted to obstruct the implementation of a certain project. It would be sufficient for them to simply create a temporary vacuum in the administrative body running it. That is, to create a concretized picture of what we have called above *social vacuum*, such as the absence of a small official at a crucial time of the project implementation in such a manner that everything may be put out of order.

This is one of the ways of colonial powers. But more important here is our reaction towards such a situation.

In order to know that, one can ask a supervisor of the said project about the reasons for the breakdown of its implementation. He would simply say:

"Oh!... because Mr...., you see, the officer who is in charge... was absent!"

Suppose your reply to this answer is as follows:

"Mr. A... but whatever the case might be, the officer was absent or he passed away, the function in the administration of the project has to be fulfilled and should not depend on the uncertain circumstances of this or that individual!"

Soon, your interlocutor will raise an eyebrow as a sign of

astonishment because he is ignorant that such a small officer may be the simple grain of sand that could stop the whole machine from working.

In a similar instance, you may be speaking to one of the "good intellectuals" trying to show to him the shortcomings of the Muslim society according to some criteria which you have derived, after long experience of investigation and study, from the realities of life.

He may, at a given moment of your discussion, interrupt you and say: 'Sir, indeed your ideas are sound and excellent, but we have to go back to reality!'

If you ask him:

"Please, what is this reality? I request you to explain it to me!"

Then, you will notice that the man uses the word 'reality' not to mean what he sees, like you, with his own eyes and touches with his senses, but to point to his illusions and fancies without any ground in the historical or sociological verities of life, because his mental formation prevents him from seeing what is before him in flesh and bone. It is the same mental formation which prevents the great administrative supervisor from perceiving the fundamental difference between the trivialities of an officer and the requirements of a function in a given project.

Generally speaking, the problem of our mental status has far-reaching implications for the security and immunity of the web of relations in the Muslim society in countries which are either under the yoke of colonialism or threatened by its designs.

This network of relations is always endangered by direct threats of colonial attacks because the Muslims have not yet succeeded to evolve an efficacious defense mechanism against such threats and attacks. These particularly come from various

kinds of rodent-like agents, especially those carefully brought up and nurtured by the colonial quarters for the specific purpose of destroying the web of social relations in Muslim society. On the contrary, one can note how the Soviet [Union] society protects its relations network against all kinds of rodent-like agents such as taking precautionary and preventive measures against what has been called *cosmopolitanism*, *deviationism* and *Trotskyism* so as to protect its cultural unity, its ideological foundations and its political relations network and so on.

We have seen recently that Khrushchev warned some such rodent-like agents who were infiltrated amongst the people, pointing out that they might be sent to breathe Siberia's fresh air! This position was aimed at preventing such agents from undermining the fibre of the moral and cultural relations of the Soviet society.

In fact, this stand with regard to a specific social problem which is still in the bud is worth attracting our attention at two different levels. First, it indicates in a tangible manner the immediate and conscious realization on the part of the Soviet leadership with regard to such a problem; second, it points to the deterrent measures they are ready to take in order to provide efficient solutions to such problems.

Hence, it is obvious that such a solution is essentially an intended plan expressed in the form of a warning by a statesman like Khrushchev who, in fact, thinks calmly about a more efficacious solution than merely deporting those anti-social rodent-like agents to Siberia. Just like any issue of great significance, so is such a problem on the agenda of the Supreme Soviet!⁵

One would only wish our consciousness would rise to the level of the problems and challenges facing Muslim society so as to apply to them the adequate and appropriate measures and solutions.

It should now be mentioned that all we have done in this chapter was no more than outlining the problem and emphasizing its existence. Evidently, colonialism makes use of whatever means—economic, political, cultural and psychological—so as to create the maximum social vacuum in our life.

Nonetheless, the colonial masters do not implement any policy without taking into account its side-effects to their ultimate goals. Rather, they take all needed precautions that the art of logistics would prescribe, i.e., while devising the offensive strategy, they also make the calculations for the probabilities of any retreat, if need be, which would demand a specific defense mechanism.

It might happen that the attacks on the social relations network in one sector or another of our socio-cultural life draw the attention of the governmental authorities or of some vigilant citizens. However, in such a situation, the colonial masters would find in our psycho-mental status, i.e. our anti-social attitudes, the best instrument to salvage their plans and schemes. These anti-social attitudes would negatively affect the consciousness of the people who try to counter those attacks by providing ready-made explanations which would endow them with a legitimate ground or, rather, show that there are no such threats at all!

Consequently, our critical mind and awareness concerning the struggle become subject to falsification and diversion which would end by a state of mental wandering masquerading under such words as open-mindedness and tolerance!

Similarly, it should be clear that the mail bearing a certain political or cultural character constitutes an integral part of the relations network of a society, and are therefore of great significance for the colonial masters.

Suppose that one day you went to the post office to complain that your mail had not reached its destination or that

you were no longer receiving any mail!

But, why should you be surprised at this? There should be no reason for such an attitude! Surely, someone would volunteer to explain to you that everything was quite normal and going its natural course and that it was you, in fact, who were abnormal, because you were worried about such a small detail! In addition, this volunteer might take the example of an anti-social attitude to warrant his explanation. He might, for instance, tell you that a telegram addressed to a great and well-known personality was, after it had reached the post-office in the well-known personality's locality, been returned to the sender because the address was not clear, and that some national newspapers wrote about that! Then, you also might remember that you had read about such an incident in a big newspaper! Consequently, you would dare say nothing and the story would have come to a close!

Likewise, not only would they have confiscated your mail, but *they would also have confiscated your critical awareness* about one of the daily details of life which are, in fact, worthy of consideration in another light within the colonial strategy to destroy our network of relations.

In this new light, the respective detail may have another explanation for it may happen by means of a weak officer behind the weaknesses of whom the conspiracy would be disguised or who may, himself, be involved in it intentionally. All such things are ultimately meant to create anti-social attitudes and behaviours that will be used to legitimize all sorts of future destruction in the fabric of the society.

In fact, such anti-social attitudes may start from a precedent in one of the details of our life and thus it would be cultivated and elevated to the level of being a key to explaining everything, and thereby to convince us that the intrigues of colonialism are no more than normal things that occur repeatedly.⁶ Thus, our mental status and attitudes are cleverly manipulated to explain and legitimize so many abnormal situations in our life.

Suppose once again that some measures were taken to protect some agricultural product, cotton for instance, from a certain disease, and that these measures have not been implemented. Such a situation will be readily explained by relating it to the '*routine*'; that is, to an anti-social habit. This habit is, in fact, a 'borrowed' one which has actually been misused, for the word '*routine*' etymologically means to put something on the '*route*'. Although some degree of slowness may be involved in the ordinary administrative '*routes*', yet this should by no means exceed a specific time-schedule under whatever circumstances.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the word has been drastically distorted in our countries in such a manner that it has been equated with a 'state of deadlock'. In such a situation all administrative affairs in many institutions and administrative services are frozen to such an extent that it is no more a question of a time-schedule no matter how long or short it might be. The balance-sheet of such anti-social attitudes is a huge amount of annual social losses without, however, any attempt on the part of those in the position of authority and responsibility to remove them.

For instance, if you express your anxiety to one of the senior officers because a given cultural policy which may concern you personally has not been put into effect since it was decided five months ago, the gentleman will only raise his eyebrows and hands to the sky and say:

"But Sir, this is the *routine*!"

And you will then be left in a state of paralysis unable to carry on your intellectual work because it passes in one way or another through this gentleman's office. You may be unable, especially if you know that he is an honest man, to tell him:

"No Sir! *routine* is not the reason. It is rather the habit of

a man put in such an office to *store* the social relations and *freeze* them in his drawer, either because of his weakness and inefficacy such that he would unconsciously impede its affair, or because he is a conspirator who would play his respective role with full consciousness!"

However, we do not claim that every anti-social attitude or habit in our life is the work of colonialism. Yet, we still do emphasize that all such attitudes serve its destructive schemes and activities thus creating huge social losses in our life.

Whatever the means used might be, the major goal aimed at is to destroy the web of our social relations and to spread rottenness in our vital energy as much as the efforts of colonialism can reach.

The masters of colonialism are indeed clever artists in this domain. They know how to direct their various trained rodent-like agents to undermine the social relations network which enables our society to undertake its collective activity in history.

Translator's Notes

1. This was Prof. Reygass, an authority in the field of studies relating to the pre-historical age of North Africa. He was the chair professor of this discipline in the University of Algiers. [*Author's note*]
2. Reference is made here to the social and cultural reform movement launched by a number of 'ulama under the name 'Association of the Algerian Muslim 'Ulama', led by the prominent Shaikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Bâdis (1889 -1940).
3. A conference convened by the major socio-cultural and political forces in Algeria to study the possibility and means of resistance against the French colonial rule. A delegation representing the parties to the conference (including The Association of the 'Ulamâ) was sent to Paris to negotiate Algerian national demands with the newly formed government of the National Front.

According to Bennabi, the Islamic Popular Congress was a positive step in galvanizing the national awareness and energy on the path of a concerted action to face the internal and external challenges. However, the high aspirations nurtured in the conference were soon frustrated by petty and partisan manipulations of some

political leaders. (See Malik Bennabi: *Mudhakkirātu Shāhidin lil'Qarn (Memoirs of A Witness of the Century)*, Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1984, p.394.

4. Most probably, Bannabi alludes here to his friend, the physician and intellectual, Dr. Abdul Azīz al Khālidī who wrote a foreword for the first French edition of Bennabi's book *Les Conditions de la Renaissance* (first published in Algiers in 1949).
5. It should be remarked here that, by positively drawing our attention to the measures taken by the Soviet leadership to protect their country's ideological system and socio-political order, Bennabi never approved of the Marxist doctrine or its ramifications. He only attempts to bring home the idea and concept of efficacy in whatever context it is manifested.

Actually, Bennabi had deep reservations as to the philosophical and ethical postulates of Marxism. It was, therefore, easy for him to contend, as early as the mid 1950s, that Marxism was just an internal crisis in the context of western civilization. He even went so far as to predict that, sooner or later, things would resume their normal course as soon as the spiritual sources of the Marxian doctrines dried out.

Perhaps the fulfilment of Bennabi's prophecy can better be seen in Mikhail Gorbachev's *Glasnot'* and *Perestroika* as well as in the subsequent disintegration of the communist Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall which had divided Europe in two.

6. I have personally faced a situation in which I found myself obliged to send a statement to four different newspapers to publish, because it was related to defending our cultural network against colonial destructive schemes, but none of the newspapers concerned has published the statement. I have only two explanations for this. (1) either the statement did not reach the said newspapers, and this is a tragedy, or (2) the newspapers did not want to publish it, and this is more tragic. [Author's note]

In Defence of the Social Relations Network

There are certain circumstances in which the human being perceives, spontaneously and through an *immediate intuition*, the essential meaning of certain things or facts which the sophisticated methods of the rational and discursive mind sometimes fail to comprehend. Such circumstances can indeed reveal to us the most fundamental meaning of civilization. Thus, civilization consists in the way the human being learns how to live within a community and how he perceives at the same time the significance and the role of the web of social relations in organizing human life so as to enable the community to assume its historical role.

Grasping this point will enable us to easily realize the utmost importance of the defense mechanism intuitively set up by a society to protect its relations network from any harm or danger.

Thus, all the sacred teachings and values with which a human society—even a ‘primitive’ one—shrouds its life are in fact different manifestations of the same defense mechanism whose success varies from one society to another.

Accordingly, all the laws, whether Divinely revealed or man-made, are in reality defensive measures meant to safeguard the social relations network in the absence of which human life can never prosper and develop neither morally nor materially.

Likewise, the Ten Commandments revealed to Prophet

Mūsā (Moses), peace be upon him, were but the manifestation of the 'Sublime Will' which sustains our existence with a providential protection. They teach us how to live with our parents and relatives: "*Honor thy father and thy mother (...); Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor; Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's*".¹

This was the primary efficient defense mechanism to safeguard the social relations network of a nascent society, that which would realise God's promise to the progeny of Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) through the message of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon them, and through the 'middle ummah'² appointed by God to carry out the historical concerted action which could establish the strongest bonds between the civilized humanity personified in Salmān al-Fārisī and the 'primitive' humanity represented by Bilāl of Abbysinia.

Actually, the deep roots of this relationship can be traced back to that very remote divine command: '*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*'.³

Therefore, all moral principles and teachings, whether religious or secular, are traced back to this sacred foundation on which the moral edifice of humanity stands and which allows a society to carry out its collective activity.

Indeed, all the sacred teachings which 'primitive' societies have ever venerated as well as the ethical and moral values and principles to which the civilized societies have ever subscribed are but different manifestations of the same and common moral teachings and values. The implementation of these teachings and values takes different forms according to the circumstances of the history of mankind; their ultimate goal is to protect the social relations network on which human society depends for carrying out its concerted action in history.

Thus, modern legal systems are only the application of those teachings and values in specific situations originating from the circumstances and experiences of life both at the national and international levels. The purpose of each rule of law is in the last analysis to discourage and minimize the repulsive and disintegrative attitudes on the one hand, and to promote and maximize the attractive and integrative attitudes and effects on the other, within the framework of the social web which includes all the activities of human society—whether ‘primitive’ and simple or civilized and sophisticated—and allows it to carry them out.

Otherwise, what would be the import of minimizing the disintegrative and repulsive factors and of maximizing that of the integrative and attractive forces between the members of a society if not to teach them how to live together, that is to say how to be civilized? What would such phrases as: ‘do not steal’, ‘do not kill’, ‘do not lie’, mean?

Of course, they mean so many things, the most important of which is certainly to minimize the negative repulsive aspects in the attitudes and conduct of the members of the society.

Furthermore, what would be the meaning of such phrases as: ‘do charity’, ‘love thy brother as thou love thyself’, ‘fulfil thy promise’?

Undoubtedly, they mean a lot of things, the most important of which is obviously to promote and maximize the positive attractive outcome of the social inclinations and attitudes that unite the members of the society.

Finally, what would be the significance of the moral teachings and values—which are sometimes despised by those who claim to lead us to civilization by stimulating our lower instincts—if not to guide us on the path of true civilization by teaching us how to live with one another?

Herein lies the fundamental difference between culture and

science: Culture is nothing but to learn to be civilized; that is, to use all our psycho-mental faculties and abilities in the *realm of persons* according to the dictates of our conscience. Whereas science is only a product of civilization, i.e., it is the power of our intellect applied to the *realm of objects*.

Likewise, the former animates our energies and entirely integrates us in its order, whilst the latter does so only partially.

Consequently, culture shapes our relationships within the human order, while science establishes our links with the order of things and material phenomena.

In the light of the above, one can easily realize how ignorant are those who claim to lead us on the path of civilization by instigating our lower instincts. Indeed, their understanding of civilization does not go beyond the lexical meaning of the term or, at best, that popularized by newspaper columnists; they are totally ignorant of its real meaning and content.

It is obvious that 'these permissive teachers' of civilization are the real enemies of genuine progress and development. They are no more than rodent-like agents who erode the very essence of civilization as rats would gnaw the piles of wheat.

Therefore, if we are to develop an efficient defense mechanism for the sake of civilization, it should, in the first place, be directed against such rodent-like creatures. Indeed, our society should allocate a reward for the one who invents the most efficient rodenticide to defend the web of its relations.

However, these rodent-like agents are not the only category which destroys our society by undermining the relations network which enables it to undertake its concerted action. *There are rather two kinds of treachery for a society: one that destroys its spirit, and another that damages its means.*

The former creates social vacuum by eroding the ideals,

moral values, and spirit which preserve for a society the necessary strain that enables it to carry out its mission in history. Whereas the latter creates social vacuum by diverting both the creative forces and moral values of the society out of the realm of real facts and phenomena.

Accordingly, one category neglects the commands of the Heavens, while the other ignores the exigencies of the earth. Yet, they end up through different, and often conflicting, ways in one and the same result: social vacuum where the spirit as well as the means of civilization fade away.

A civilization is indeed utterly betrayed when its torch-bearers deviate from the path of the concerted action of the society by following different and contradictory directions that render such concerted action impossible. Then, some would slide into the abyss of mysticism, others would sink in the world of miracles from which flowed the tale of "*Alf Layla wa Layla*",⁴ a third group would indulge in 'drinking and dancing' in the name of progress and civilization!

At this moment, the decisive Divine judgement, like a hammer, visits the society announcing: "*And [know] that this is the way leading straight to me: follow it then, and follow not other ways lest they cause you to deviate from His way. [All] this has He enjoined upon you, so that you might remain conscious of Him*" (Qur'an: 6, 153).

It is therefore a matter of duty to take in earnest the issue of safeguarding the web of our social relations, not only from a specific category of rodent-like agents—those licencees of a foreign culture which they have badly assimilated—but rather from any kind of agents that would create, in different ways, social vacuum in our life.

As our daily experience teaches us, the use of rodenticides is not an efficient therapy. Following is but one example from that experience. Just as the respective authorities in the capital

city of a Muslim country have directed vehicle drivers not to hoot except for extreme necessity, they are rather hooting in a foolish manner! Of course, this is a simple, gross example; yet it adequately pinpoints the symptoms of our indifference and inefficacy to protect our social relations network. One could compile a whole book on such small details of our life, but would it be worth such painstaking effort?

To sum up, we have to perceive the problem in its totality and to formulate it in terms of a social education programme. It is not a question of imprisoning ourselves in partial shortsighted solutions; the failure, and, indeed, the absurdity of such solutions have been proven by our practical experience.

What an irony to see on the gate of a hospital a poster warning visitors about making noise so as not to annoy patients, while, ironically, the director of the hospital himself is keeping inside such a big dog that keeps barking the whole day!

Should we in such a situation remind the 'respected director' that he has forgotten to hang the poster in his own office?⁵

In fact, if we were to follow such logic, the idea of social education will definitely lose its meaning and function; this is because the objective of social education is not to just teach people to say or write nice words. It is rather *to teach every individual the art of living with his fellow humans. That is how to be a civilized human being.*

Taken in this perspective, social education is nothing but *culture*.

But is that enough?

The answer is of course in the negative, for the concept of culture itself has undergone much distortion due to misunderstanding and misrepresentation, as we have elaborated elsewhere.⁶

Accordingly, social education is by no means a set of rules

and theoretical concepts which have no influence on our real life, that is on the realms of *persons*, *ideas* and *objects*.

Nor is culture a mere output of self-styled intellectuals and encyclopaedic scholars who might know all the lexical meanings of terms, without any awareness of what such terms would stand for in real life, be that good or evil! Neither is it the prerogative of those who might know a lot about the principles and teachings of Islam but who fail to apply even a single one of them to change their own selves as well as their environment.

Likewise, any truth which does not affect the social triad of persons, ideas and objects is a dead truth. Similarly, an idea which does not inspire any specific activity is but a void, indeed a dead idea.

The notion of social education itself is not spared from this universal fate unless it is translated in real life into an efficient programme for changing man and to teach him how to live with his fellow men, how to create with them the means that would improve the conditions of human existence, and how to build with them the network of relations that would enable the society to carry out its concerted action in history.

By the same token, the concept of culture is doomed to be only an empty sounding word if it does not endow the concept of social education with the necessary content that allows it to fulfil its catalytic function.

It is high time to think profoundly about the essence and dimensions of such concepts not in the manner of those who would resort to lexicons, but in the manner of those who would exert their intellects properly. It is not a question of enumerating such concepts as ethics, aesthetics, praxis or technical art under various chapters that constitute culture.

We need to pedagogically conceive culture as a programme capable of *transforming the 'uncivilized' man into a civilized human being under specific psycho-temporal conditions, and*

capable of uplifting the 'civilized' man to the level of the higher ideals cherished by mankind.

As far as we in Muslim lands are concerned, we have to seriously think about the pre-civilized man as well as the man who has lost his civilizing *élan* due to a specific historical crisis, so as to determine the imperative conditions for restoring their efficacy on the basis of an ethico-aesthetic order. That is to say, we should identify the primary conditions necessary to generate the needed cultural framework.

Translator's Notes

1. *The Bible: Old Testament* (King James Version 1611, issued by Philippine Bible Society, n.d.), The Book of *Exodus* 20, the Ten Commandments, p.66.

2. Reference is made here to the Qur'anic view that God has willed the Muslims "to be a community of the middle way (lit., middlemost community), so that (with your lives) you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you" (Qur'an, 2:143).

As the late Muhammad Asad comments, "the expression 'a community of the middle way' might be said to summarise, as it were, the Islamic attitude towards the problem of man's existence as such: denial of the view that there is an inherent conflict between the spirit and the flesh, and a bold affirmation of the natural, God-willed unity of this twofold aspect of human life". (*The Message of the Qur'an*, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1984, p.30, note 118.)

3. *The Bible: Old Testament*, p.66.

4. *The Thousand Nights and One Night*: A book of stories and tales about kings and queens, princes and princesses, men and women from all walks of life, including thieves and witches, adventurers and charlatans, lunatics and normal people, as well as animals and jinn.

Representing popular imagination and festivity of Muslim people, it has no specific author to whom it can be ascribed. Critics are of the view that the contents of this book originated during the 13th and 14th centuries AD. As for its sources of inspiration, it seems to have combined, together with the Arabian components, Indian and Persian elements of pre-Islamic mythical origins.

Since the first half of the 19th century, *Al-Layla wa-Layla* has been of great interest for scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Besides its numerous printings in Arabic, versions of it appeared in European languages. Literary works inspired by it also appeared in Arabic.

The most comprehensive and critical edition of it has been produced by Muhsin Mahdi, professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Harvard University, based on the earliest known sources and benefitting from the findings of many scholars who paid special attention to this work. See *The Thousand and One Nights* (3 vols.), Arabic text edited with Introduction and notes by Muhsin Mahdi, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1984.

A quite comprehensive version of it appeared in English based on a French translation; See *The Book of The Thousand Nights and One Night* (5 vols.), rendered into English by Powys Mathews, Routledge and Kegan Paul, second edition 1964. Extracts from this work had also been translated into English by Sir Richard Burton and appeared in the 1880s in one volume under the title: *Tales of the Arabian Nights*.

5. Most probably, if we ask this man about his funny behaviour, he will not fail to provide reasons to justify it. However, these very reasons will obviously compel us to count him amongst the rodent-like agents that destroy the society while claiming to render service to it! [*Author's note*].
6. See the author's book *Mushkilat ath-Thaqāfah (The Problem of Culture)* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 4th edition 1984, reprint 1986).

Foundations of Social Education

Human problems have their specific nature. They totally differ from those of the inanimate material order. Thus, no solutions can be applied to them which do not derive their criteria from the human order itself.

The science of human society has, therefore, its own and different methods the negligence of which will necessarily lead us to deficiencies and anomalies, such as is the case with a person who would, as the French saying has it, *'cure a wooden leg by cauterization!'*¹

However, this truth is unfortunately often ignored in Muslim lands where almost all solutions are borrowed from western developed countries and consequently fail to yield the same results they usually have in their origin, as if they had lost their efficacy on the way to being transported from their original social environment.

Accordingly, the affairs of human society do not allow for mechanical approaches, nor can any kind of borrowing apply to them. This means that any solution pertaining to social matters always involves some specific elements which cannot be defined nor can they be expressed in its formal definition. These elements constitute a tacit, yet integral, component of such solutions in the course of their implementation under normal circumstances; that is, in the circumstances of the countries of their origin.

To put it more precisely, these elements are part and parcel

of the social environment and thereby they automatically enter in the process of implementation of any social solution in the form of implicit conditions and elements imposed on one's behaviour by the social environment itself. But as soon as such social solutions are applied outside their original environment, they will necessarily lose those tacit elements because of their separation from their normal conditions.

We have already drawn the attention of the reader in *The Problem of Culture* to this aspect. We can, nonetheless, shed more light on it by an analogy from chemistry. In this respect, we shall take the chemical formula pertaining to the structure of water which we are taught in secondary schools: $\text{water} = 2\text{H}_2 + \text{O}_2$.

No doubt, this formula is correct and valid from the analytical point of view. But suppose someone ventures to produce water by applying it literally. Of course, his experiment will be lacking an essential ingredient in the course of such an attempt, that is the *catalyst* which the analytical formula has not expressed and which it can by no means express despite the fact that it adequately reflects the quantitative relationship between the two components of water, namely hydrogen and oxygen. Yet, it is not applicable so long as one is not aware of the *catalyst* which completes it.

Accordingly, any solutions concerning the affairs of human society and which we borrow from other countries, where their relevance has been established, are quite similar to the chemical formula just mentioned; i.e., they are complete and relevant in those countries. However, they presuppose in the course of implementation some elements which cannot be borrowed for they are difficult to determine and, if determined, can never be separated from the environment of the lending countries; that is to say, they cannot be separated from the *spirit* which animates them.

Therefore, in order to handle properly and efficiently the

problems facing our society, we should never rely on borrowed solutions no matter how relevant and successful they might be in the countries from which they are borrowed. This is because the relevance and success of any borrowed solution are inextricably linked to the social environment within which it has 'taken shape' and to the 'spirit' which has 'shaped' it.

Does this mean that we have to reject all borrowing?

Indeed, it will be a weakness to reject being enlightened by the experiences of others or to benefit from their achievements. However, any 'borrowing' [we make] must be adapted to the cultural postulates and social foundations of the borrowing country.

In other words, we have to create in our countries the necessary climate and conditions ourselves for the implementation of whatever solutions envisaged for our social problems.

It is at this level that the question of the fundamental conditions arises not only as regards the ready-made solutions we borrow from foreign countries, but also with regard to whatever solutions we might visualise to solve the problems which face the Muslim society at the present stage of its history.

Those belonging to the intellectual circles to whom the doctrine of *islāh* raises some concern may express their astonishment at the fact that the solutions whose relevance and efficacy had been proven in the early Islamic society have lost their efficacy in the present times!

In this connection, they may take the example of 'zakat', one of the pillars of Islam on which much of the cultural and military institutions as well as the social services and religious activities of the Islamic state in the past depended. Paradoxically, this Islamic institution has completely lost its social efficacy at present. Indeed, the "Idea of Islam" itself whose impact on the

early Muslims was resounding throughout history has no longer the same influence and power to orientate and mould our behaviour and actions as well as to shape our thinking and feelings! In this respect, those Muslims who are still sincerely anxious about the malaise of the *ummah*, but who do not have enough patience and breath to study it and investigate its deep causes, would only lament and say: '*We are Muslims only by birth certificates.*' Though such a statement pinpoints the truth, it would have been more beneficial had they made some elementary efforts to understand the root causes of our malaise.

Anyway, one can interestingly note the recurrence of so many instances in our life that would guide our present exercise.

One may observe, for example, the overwhelming influence the Islamic Truth still exerts on the people who attend, for example, the Friday congregational prayer and listen to the *khutba* (sermon) of the *imām* in the mosque. In fact, the words of the *imām* would deeply shake the audience in such a manner that we very often witness in the mosque a man completely immersed in his tears. Indeed, the *imām* himself, so much excited, may sometimes be unable to continue his speech!

However, once the prayer is over and once he has returned to his wordly affairs, the Truth which has just shaken the man would rather, unfortunately, be left in the mosque and thus fails to accompany him in his 'public life'.

Likewise, as the Muslim steps out of the threshold of the mosque, he actually moves from one world to another. This situation urges us to remark that *there is a state of dichotomy between the spiritual and social aspects of one's life, indeed there is a divorce between one's 'Ideal' and one's 'Life'.*

At present, the Muslim actually suffers from a dichotomy which separates his personality in two conflicting sides: *one that inspires his behaviour inside the mosque, and another which*

shapes it in public life.

He is thus subject to a state resembling to a great extent the 'Scottish shower';² that is he is exposed to the most contradictory and conflicting influences. As he enters the mosque and listens to the preaching of the *imām* in the Friday congregational prayer, for example, he would feel at home, thus regaining his warmth of heart and quietude of soul; but as soon as he goes back to the scene of ordinary life, coldness of heart as well as disquietude of soul would take possession of him again! In the mosque, he may listen to the preaching on the virtues and rewards of fasting during the month of *Ramadān*, while, upon returning home, he may listen on the radio to the 'weekly speech' of the president of a Muslim country instigating the people not to fast under the pretext of facing the requirements of social renaissance and reconstruction,³ as if such renaissance and reconstruction can ever be achieved without a solid moral basis, or as if any social effort can be divorced from the moral and spiritual forces that hold it up without utterly frustrating that effort itself! Simply, this is absurd.

Interestingly, the present experience in the Soviet Union does show us, by contrast, to what extent due consideration is accorded, in planning and establishing the socialist edifice in that country, to the full potential of the "communist creed" as well as to the moral forces which it motivates. This is evident to the extent that if a member of the Marxist leadership ventures to spell out any statement that may harm the unity which integrates the moral and the material forces of that country, he would be considered a fool and harmful and would immediately be dismissed from the leadership ranks of the communist party!

This only shows to what extent the Muslim, on the contrary, is not able to realize the unity of his being and personality in the present Muslim society.

Undoubtedly, this dichotomy goes back to a very remote

period in our history. It first took place between the spiritual and the political, between the state and the Islamic Ideal. One could trace it back to the 'battle of *Siffin*'. Thereafter, its negative repercussions have been spreading throughout the Muslim *ummah* like a chronic disease which no medicine has been able to cure.

Today, we can see the consequences of the dichotomy between the spiritual and the social at the level of the Muslim's behaviour inside and outside the mosque.

In other words, the Muslim *finds his true self* in the climate of the mosque for it is the mosque that creates the original and necessary ambiance where his conscience is nurtured and cultivated, and thus it is here that he embraces his *true being*. But, he loses the relationship with that original ambiance as soon as he steps outside the mosque thus finding himself submerged by the social conditions which destroy in him 'the person' and revive 'the raw individual'!

To just depict the Muslim's tragedy in modern romantic terms, one can say that the Muslim at present undergoes, on the one hand, the state of Dr. Jekyll which incarnates the control of the 'person' over the 'ego' and, on the other, that of Mr. Hyde which embodies the vices of the 'individual'.⁴

As a matter of fact, human society has always to depend on nature, i.e., it has to borrow from the individual's natural instincts the necessary vital energy that enables it to carry out its concerted action in history.

However, this vital energy may destroy the society unless it has gone through a process of conditioning and adaptation. This vital energy must be subjected to a specific order inspired by a sublime ideal that effects the reorganization and reorientation of that energy in such a manner that transforms it from fulfilling mere biological functions to preserve the survival of the species into an energy assuming social functions fulfilled

by the human being as he is engaged in the concerted action of a society.

Thus, the problem faces us at two levels: *social and psychological*. It has been shown through the different aspects of dichotomy and contrast mentioned above that, in order to solve the problem at its two levels, we should depend on a *sublime ideal* that could link the spiritual to the social and realize anew the integration and unity of the Muslim in such a manner that he may regain his equilibrium and find "his self" both inside and outside the mosque.

No doubt, the Islamic ideal did prove in the past its efficacy in creating a society which was able to carry out its concerted action and score high degrees of achievement and success. It indeed brought the vital energy of the nomadic Arab tribesman under its order thereby transforming him into a civilized and civilizing person at the same time. There are numerous instances testifying to the fact that the Islamic ideal manifested its full efficacy in reorganizing and orientating the vital energy that the Arabian peninsula bequeathed to the age of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

While the Prophet was so concerned with the material demands of the nascent Islamic state and with meeting the requirements of war which was about to break out with the 'battle of Badr', the Companions willingly offered him parts of their properties in a manner that was impressively expressed in the following words by Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah:

"Oh! Apostle of Allah take from our property whatever you like. By Allah, what you take from it is more preferable to us than what you leave."

This is but one instance that shows how the vital energy represented by the instinctive inclination of man to possessiveness and acquisition was transformed into a controlled and regularised

energy oriented towards achieving noble social goals.

Be that as it may, the primordial task that must constitute the corner-stone in any strategy for Islamic renaissance is to reorganize and reorientate our vital energies, for this is the *sine qua none* condition that will endow the efforts of renaissance and reconstruction with the needed efficacy.

One such task was carried out in the early Islamic society thanks to the subscription to the Islamic Ideal not merely as theoretical doctrines and ruling taught by the jurists, but as a dynamic and radiating *truth which shapes the individual's actions and movements and inspires his motives and feelings*. This is what AbdulLah ibn 'Umar and Jundib —God be pleased with them—described in the following narration: *'We lived a long time during which we would be given imān before (the knowledge of) the Qur'an. (As soon as) a surah (of the Qur'an) is revealed to Muhammad, peace be upon him, each one of us would learn its halāl and harām as well as its commands and prohibitions and the limits at which one should stop.'*⁵

In a preceding chapter, we drew a theoretical scheme of the process of the reorganization of the vital energy. We shall now try to shed more light on that process which in fact was the work of Islam itself within the Islamic environment. We shall also try to demonstrate how the religious ideal generates the process for conditioning the vital energy and subjecting it to its order. To that end, we need to resort to the methodology of psychoanalysis so as to trace the course of civilization as being a temporal expression of the reciprocal actions and reactions that emerge at the very beginning of that course between the individual and the religious ideal which prompts him to movement and action.

Looking at the individual at the zero point of the diagram drawn above, we find him in the state which some Muslim scholars call '*fitrah*' (natural disposition). This means that he is

fully "equipped" with all his inborn instincts thus being in the state of '*homo natura*'. The function of the religious ideal manifests itself in subjecting those instincts to a process of conditioning and adaptation representing what is known in Freudian psychology as 'Repression'. Yet, this process is far from eradicating those instincts; instead, it regulates them in an integrated functional relationship with the imperatives of the religious ideal. Thus, the vital energy represented by the instincts is not abolished; it is rather channelled according to a specific order.

At this stage, the individual is partly liberated from the natural laws which govern his biological structure in such a way that his being is almost totally under the control of the spiritual forces awakened in him by the religious ideal; thus, he leads a new life governed by the laws of the soul.

It was according to such laws that Bilal, despite the severe torture inflicted on his body, was raising his finger, repeating in a defying manner '*Ahad, Ahad*'. It is quite obvious that these words do not reflect the reaction of the natural instincts which were put under control, nor does it reflect the judgement of reason, for reason is unable to react in such a state of severe pain! It is nothing other than the voice of the soul which was liberated from the bondage of the instincts being now entirely subordinated to the power of the 'faith' that had imbibed Bilāl ibn Rabāh's self.

Similarly, the Islamic society was undergoing the same process of transformation. Like Bilāl, it was not expressing itself in the language of flesh and blood. The voice of reason was not as yet heard in that nascent society. Thus, all the language used at this stage was based on the 'logic' of the soul for it was exclusively the manifestation of the spiritual forces inherent in the human being.

This is the first stage of civilization, the stage in which all

the instincts of man are 'tamed' and integrated in a specific order that pulls their reins and restrains their drive.

It was the soul expressing itself through the voice of Bilāl thus ignoring the demands of flesh and blood as if he were challenging his human nature and pointing by his forefinger to the future destiny of the new religion.

It is also the soul that was expressing itself through the act of the woman who came before the Prophet, peace be upon him, confessing her sin and requesting him to implement the *hadd* punishment of adultery on her!

All these events are certainly beyond the ordinary standards of mankind, and clearly indicate that the inborn instincts were put under a state of 'repression', though they were still preserving their propensity for emancipation. Most important, however, is the fact that it is at this level that the conflict between the soul and the inborn instincts reaches its peak.

Nevertheless, the society carries on its course of evolution and development in so far as the religious ideal keeps its pace as a radiating and inspiring force. As the social relations network of the society becomes more extensive and complex, new material problems and exigencies arise.

In order to cope with the rising new problems and exigencies as well as with the new standards that emerge accordingly, civilization assumes a new turn that coincides with the *Renaissance* in the case of the European cycle, and with the advent of the Umayyad dynasty and breakdown of the Righteous Caliphate in the case of the Islamic cycle.

In both cycles, the new turn was that of *reason*.

Because, unlike the *soul*, *reason* does not have complete sway over the natural instincts of the individual. These instincts are emancipated gradually with the weakening power of the

soul. Such was the situation during the Umayyad period when the society ceased to exert its pressure over the individual.

We should point out, however, that the instincts are not emancipated fully all at once; their emancipation takes place gradually in proportion to the gradual decay of the power of the *soul*.

As history unfolds, the evolutionary process of civilization stamps its imprints both in the individual psyche and in the society's moral edifice. At a certain point in its historical evolution, the society ceases exerting its moderating power on the individual's behaviour. The instinctual impulses thus become more emancipated, and the individual's behaviour becomes less subordinate to moral considerations.

If one could measure the repercussions of this psychological transformation by accurate means, then we would expect to notice the creeping decadence eroding the society's criteria of its moral standard.

Put differently, one would expect to see that, as soon as society enters the age of reason, the social efficacy and radiation of the religious ideal starts to fade away progressively.

Likewise, the apogee of civilization, i.e., the age of the flourishing of sciences and arts, marks, from an etiological⁶ viewpoint, the beginning of a social pathology which does not attract the attention of the historian nor that of the sociologist because its symptoms are as yet far from noticeable.

Hence, the instincts, previously subservient to the religious ideal, carry on their emancipation process and gradually gain sway over both the individual and the society. Once they are fully emancipated, man's destiny is at their mercy and, consequently, a new stage of civilization, i.e., the third stage, begins in which instinctive impulses reign, and the religious ideal no more fulfils its social function. Consequently, the society

plunges into a state of cultural decadence and chaos, thus coming to the end of a cycle of civilization.

This chronology of a civilization sheds enough light upon the phases the vital energy passes through in the civilizing process, especially on the first stage where this vital energy is subordinate to the conditioning and controlling power of the religious ideal.

It also reveals the conditions under which the process of organization and orientation of that energy takes place. This observation is of crucial importance for any project aimed at reorganizing that energy so as to reconstruct the society's relations network. In fact, this task of reorganization requires the same conditions, that is to say, the revival of the religious ideal.

In this respect, two important points can be ascertained by our daily experience:

1. The Islamic ideal no longer exerts the same influence on the individual's behaviour as it did in the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him.
2. However, it spontaneously regains its influence on him as he steps into the environment of the mosque.

It follows from the first point that the Muslim is unable to preserve his moral integrity the moment he leaves the mosque; he is thus subject to the rule of large numbers. Rather than influencing his environment in accordance with his [Islamic] ideal and values, he is influenced by this environment which ultimately alienates him from his ideal and undermines his values.

This situation sometimes takes very dramatic forms such as was manifested in the case of a reformist leader like Shaikh [at-Tayeb] al-Oqby. After struggling for so many years to promote the cause of *islāh* in Algeria, he suddenly lost his moral integrity

and ended up as an ally of colonialism. But we should add here that it would not have made a big difference if a person becomes an ally of *colonizability*.

As for the second point, it follows that the Muslim regains his moral integrity within the climate of the mosque where religious sermons recreate within the people following it the same psychological conditions the Islamic ideal used to create in the early Muslims. In this connection, not only was the vital energy of the Companions of the Prophet regulated, but it was also orientated and channelled in consonance with a specific concerted action, the history of which is known to everybody.

We find that the Muslim in our times feels the overwhelming influence of the Islamic ideal on his instincts inside the mosque and that, as soon as he leaves it, he no longer finds that same feeling. This means that he does not find in public life the necessary environment which helps him to preserve his moral integrity. While he is engaged in the pursuit of his sensual and worldly ends, he is in need not only that those objectives should not be in contradiction with his ideal, but that they should also remind him that he is engaged with his fellow Muslims in carrying out a concerted action that must culminate in the realization of that ideal.

One can perceive the significance of this remark with regard to the early Muslims. One can just ask: what would the situation have been like if, instead of calling and practically striving for the realization of their Islamic ideal in the different spheres of life, those Muslims contentedly confined themselves to simply performing their prayers in the mosque to realize it?!

Of course, they would not have been able to change the *jāhili* environment surrounding them, nor even to preserve their moral integrity, no matter what the circumstances might have been. Moreover, the *jāhili* environment would most probably have pulled them back to paganism.

Likewise, it is the concerted action that actually salvaged them, together with the people of the jāhilī environment itself.

Accordingly, the problem facing the Muslims at present is quite close to what the following tradition has clearly expressed:

*"Never will the affairs of the later generations of this ummah be set on the right path except by that which has guided its early generations."*⁷

It is therefore imperative to reorganize and reorient the vital energy of the contemporary Muslim. The primary task in this direction is to reform the way of studying and teaching the *Qur'an* in such a manner that would *reveal* anew the Qur'anic *Truth* to the conscience of the Muslim as if it were sent down to him now.⁸ A second crucial task is to identify the mission of the Muslim in the modern world.⁹ Likewise, the Muslim would be able from the beginning to preserve his moral integrity even if he is living in a society totally inimical to his ideal and values, and he would equally be able, irrespective of his state of poverty or opulence, to assume his responsibilities whatever the external material and moral circumstances.

Moreover, he would be able to gradually create his appropriate environment by exerting his influence upon the external circumstances by means of a model life that would radiate thus providing inspiration for others, such as was the case with the handful of men who lived with the Prophet in Makkah in the early days of Islam.

CONCLUSION

It should be pointed out, however, that these reflections provide no ready-made solution. Rather, they are merely a step on the path to addressing a problem which has important bearing on the future of the Muslim world.

To give these reflections any practical significance, we should lend them to the test of life in the form of an actual educational programme at the level of the Muslim *ummah*, for it is only through practice that we can advance. For such an experiment to bear fruits, it should be undertaken by a body of Muslim specialists who are immune to the bureaucratic complexes of ordinary officials, and free from the distorting 'lens' of politicians controlled by the dictates of their political parties or clans. They should also be safe from the "ethics" of the anarchists who are only fond of flattering the masses.

We should preserve for each problem its independent character. Otherwise, we would overwhelm the problem of the relations between the Muslims with one thousand secondary problems.

Muslim governments are called upon to embark on such a programme in order to revive and regenerate the Muslim *ummah* since any effort which strengthens the social relations network at the *ummic* level would necessarily strengthen it at the national level of each country.

Finally, we should never lose sight of the fact that, for the sake of a sublime ideal, people are always and everywhere ready to willingly bear the hardships of an austere order that would establish equity and justice between the rich and the poor and guarantee for each person his share with the utmost level of

efficacy, being then guided by the following wisdom: 'ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE'. This wisdom truly exemplifies the social relations network both in its perfect sense and utmost efficacy.

Cairo: *Muharram* 10, 1382 AH.

June 13, 1962 AD.

Translator's Notes:

1. Due to the lack of reliable French sources at my disposal, I could not confirm the original version of this saying; I have therefore tried to render it as literally as might be acceptable based on its translation in Bennabi's text.
2. This is an allusion to a Scottish custom in using the shower whereby very hot water is immediately followed by very cold water! [*Author's note*]
3. This was Habib Bourguiba, former president of Tunisia, who, in 1961, ordered the people not to fast in *Ramadan*, which he did with some of his ministers so as to set the practical example for the people. This caused a strong mass reaction led by some 'Ulamā', the most outstanding among them was the great *fāqih* and commentator of the Qur'an, Shaikh Muhammad at-Tāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, and Skaikh Abdur Rahmān Khliṣ who was then the leading *imām* and *khatīb* of the great Uqba mosque in the city of Kairouan, once capital of the Aghlabid dynasty.
4. Reference is made here to the famous classic of Robert Louis Stevenson which depicts the story of a physician who applied some scientific methods that helped him to analyse his own self into two different personalities: the personality of a wild and criminal man represented by Mr. Hyde and the personality of a good and honest scientist represented by Dr. Jekyll.
The work of Stevenson has been considered by many critics as a perfect literary exposition of what is known in psychology as schizophrenic personality.
5. See in this respect Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Jarirāt: *Jāmi' al Bayān Fī Ta'wīl' Āyi'l Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1992), vol.1, p.64. According to Tabarī, the narrator of this tradition quoted by the author was rather 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd.
6. Etiological, from Etiology: the philosophy or study of causation; it is also the study of the causes of diseases.
7. See footnote 1, p. 2 of this book.

8. Here Bennabi echoes the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal who narrated that his father instructed him to read the Qur'an and deal with it as if it were revealed to him personally.
9. Almost nineteen months before his death in October 31, 1973, Bennabi addressed himself to the issue of the mission of the Muslim in the modern world in two lectures which he delivered in Damascus (March, 28 and April, 4, 1972) on the way back from Makkah after his last performance of *hajj*. These two lectures have been published in book form; see Malik Bennabi: *Dawr al-Muslim wa Risālatuh...* (*The Role and Mission of the Muslim in the Last Third of the 20th Century*) (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1989).



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